play magazine presents

girls of gaming

A celebration of gaming's greatest females and the people who made them....

Dead Sexy

BloodRayne

With a movie and video game sequel in the works, gaming's hottest hybrid is hotter then hell

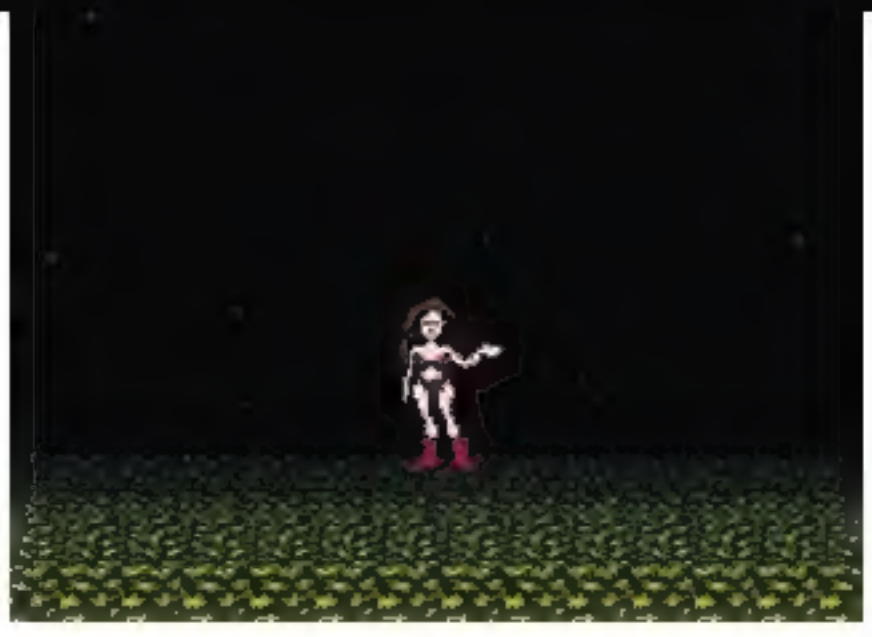
editorial

girls of gaming act 1...

When I set out to finally assemble Girls of Gaming—a project I've had in the back of my head for the last three years—I knew conventional thinking would brand it a gratuitous T&A ploy attempting to cash in on America's insatiable appetite for sex. But that's not what this book is about, as you already know, obviously having paged through it if you're now taking the time to actually read it. Sure, there are some sexy girls within these pages—that was inevitable—but for the most part, these girls' strengths aren't necessarily measured in sex appeal. In many cases, it's an attitude or a particular style that makes them so alluring, and that is what I was hoping to communicate with this book. Girls like Gum, Cole, Samus, Kya, Jade and so on captivate without showing their naughty bits, while on the other side of the scale, the girls of Extreme Beach Volleyball or Soul Calibur represent all that is wonderful about the tasteful representation of the female form.

One of the wonderful things about the video game industry that separates it from film and other types of entertainment is that it's filled with people who exhibit an insatiable appetite for both creativity and integrity. Unlike film, a video game could never survive on gratuitous sex alone (as evidenced by the recent BMX XXX), and so the females dotted throughout our games offer much more than in other mediums. Rikku, Yuna and Paine from Final Fantasy X-2, Jen from Primal and Flynn from Dekan, for instance, are all beautiful women, but they exhibit inner beauty as well, an embodiment of spirit and personality that transcends the code and sends a clear message that beauty is more than skin deep.

Who can ever forget that fateful first encounter when Samus removed her helmet to expose her flowing locks, or their first tumble with Chun-Li, or better yet, Cammy, the epitome of the female form? The first two decades of console gaming has seen a steady rise in female heroes dotted with milestones forever engrained into its history, from 16-bit heroines like



El Viento and Alisia Dragoon to Nintendo's first female with Iggle, the unforgettable Vela, to that first cone-breasted Ms. Croft to the beguiling Tifa Lockhart to today's near-perfect representations of every guy's favorite pastime (followed closely by video games, sports and selected movies containing either aliens, big explosions or Halle Berry naked).

Throughout my career in gaming, going on 14 years, critters and females have always been my favorite protagonists, and since I'm fairly certain Critters of Gaming wouldn't have gone over so well, I bring you the following...sorry Vince...and Sonic...and Ratchet...and Sly...and Velox...and Yoshi...Kirby, Blinx, Fox McCloud, Jim, Neo, Headdy...okay, okay. Maybe next year!

Dave Halverson Editor-in-chief
dhalverson@playmagazine.com

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Special Thanks *To all of the developers and pr people that dropped what they were doing in the heats of Q4 to put their best girls forward, our sincere thanks. And to all of the designers, producers, and artisans that lent their insight we sincerely appreciate you taking the time to shine a little light on one of the most important and magical areas of gaming: character design.*

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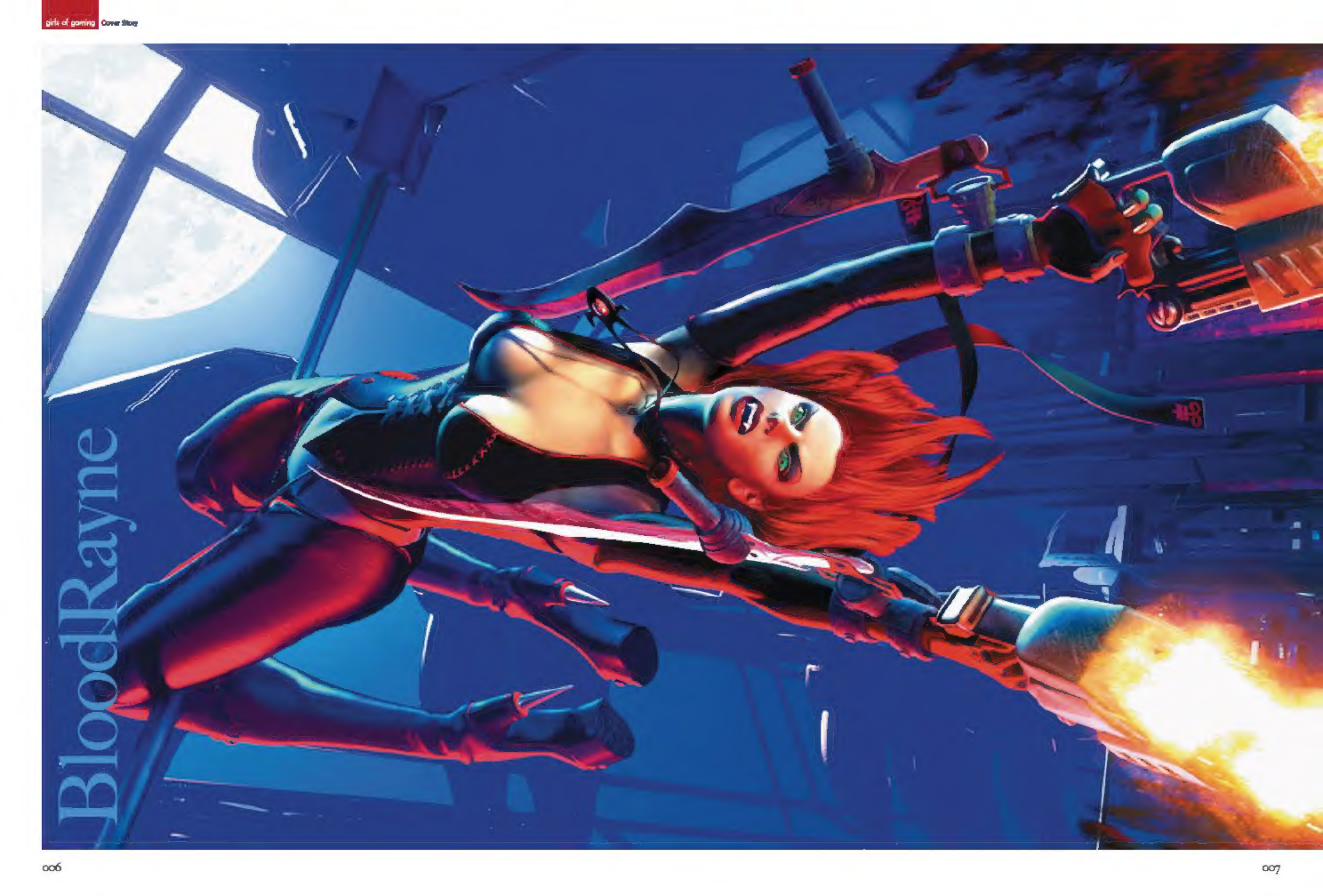
Women of Action

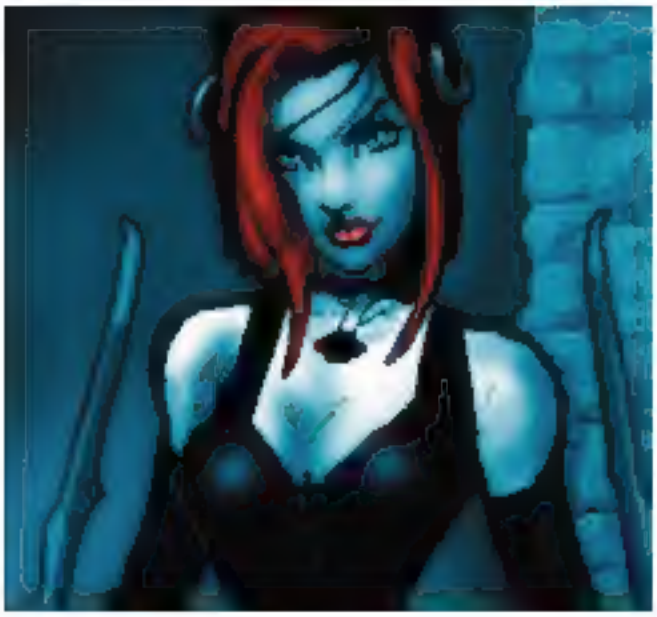
Hilrana Nightshade
Alex Eternal Darkness
Jade BG&E
Vanessa PNO3
Kya Kya: Dark Lineage
Jen Primal
Yuna, Rikku, Paine FFX2
Ursula Gladius
Aileh, Buki Sudeki
Christie, Lisa DOA XBV
Kaylie Redeemer
Ylia FFVII
Leeza X Headhunter


BloodRayne

It wasn't easy choosing a cover for Girls of Gaming. In fact, it was a maddening undertaking. My instinct was to put a cute Japanese character on the cover, like Tifa Lockheart or one of the X-2 girls, or perhaps Cammy, sticking to my hardcore gamer roots. Of course, the powers that be wanted either a scantily clad model dressed up like a game character or something in the vein of Outlaw Volleyball, which I'd never do.

I've been infatuated with BloodRayne from the moment I set eyes on her, and although I was less than thrilled with her gaming debut (it was a good game, but not great), the knowledge that it sold incredibly well—well enough to green-light a big-money sequel that's going to rock our worlds—and the announcement of the upcoming feature film, made the choice clear. BloodRayne is well on her way to super-stardom, and seeing how Lara has apparently vacated the throne, for now at least, who better to vie for the top spot? People didn't come out for Jen, Nova has yet to debut, and Samus, well, Nintendo doesn't possess a single frame of her outside of the suit, nor do they intend to in the foreseeable future. Plus, I love vampires... we all love vampires. If she showed up on any given day and asked you to turn... c'mon... PS9 here we come!

Now, indulge yourself with the first-ever interview on the upcoming BloodRayne sequel. I think you'll agree that the folks at Terminal reality and Majesco are on the right track. Having been ushered in on 128-bit and steady securing a loyal fanbase, BloodRayne is a brand we'll likely see through to the next generation and beyond, so without further ado, the first interview on BloodRayne II...



"BloodRayne cleaves her victim down the middle from head to groin."

What do you feel is the single most important aspect of character design?
The most important and the most challenging aspect is designing a character that has widespread appeal. You need to give your character a unique look, something that makes people say, "oh wow," something that sucks them into the game. Aside from BloodRayne's obvious sexiness, I think the huge blades attached to her arms really make her stand out in people's eyes. You want to see her in action.

[illegible]
She has a presence that is both menacing and sexy at the same time. Her dual nature makes her a particularly strong female lead character with lots of attitude.

Your favorite character ever (from any game)?
That's not a very fair question to ask me; it just wouldn't be right for me to say anyone other than BloodRayne. But if I had to choose a different character, I'd say the zerglings from StarCraft or Dante from Devil May Cry.

[illegible] of the franchise do you think the film should make sure to capture?
Small is relative. When compared to the huge budgets for *Lord of the Rings* or *The Matrix*, BloodRayne's looks small, but there are plenty of enjoyable movies that have had a budget similar to BloodRayne's. I think they need to capture the fast-paced gymnastic combat and her supernatural abilities (like dilated perception) to stay true to the franchise and really bring her to life.

Who is your ideal candidate for the lead role?
The fans all have their own differing ideas of who should play the lead. I've read preferences that range from Milla Jovovich to Jennifer Garner. Whoever is ultimately offered the role needs the right mix of presence, attitude and sex appeal in order to adequately capture BloodRayne's character.

[illegible] physics issues. What are you doing differently in BloodRayne 2?
We are implementing advanced rigid and soft-body physics into the Internal Engine. This will help BloodRayne 2 feel much more realistic when it comes to breaking apart objects...or people.

Any new moves/stealth or vehicles to speak of? We know you have a great racing [illegible]
There are a lot of new moves that will offer players a wider range of offensive and defensive gymnastic combat. For example, BloodRayne can now use horizontal and vertical poles to her advantage in a number of creative ways. She can climb vertical poles to evade her enemies and shoot down at them from a higher vantage point. She can also extend her body and swing around these poles to kick back enemies into the surrounding environment.

The horizontal poles arguably make for even more exciting options. BloodRayne can do giants like a gymnast; she can swing from pole to pole to avoid enemies on the ground and/or access higher areas. She can also perch on these poles or hang from her knees and shoot down at enemies below her.

BloodRayne 2 also features rail-sliding. The sliding functions similar to an action sports title but with the added dimension of gun and blade combat during the slide. Rail transitions and acrobatics will also be involved in these sequences. This will make for some very exciting gameplay that is still as fast-paced as all of BloodRayne's combat but in a very different way.

We're also working very hard to address a major combat criticism in the original game—namely, that the player was not fully in control of attack combos. The combo system in BloodRayne 2 will function similar to systems in the fighting genre. Players will have access to a menu of combo moves so they can execute the attack they want, exactly when and how they want to do it (after they've earned the combo through gameplay). This new system goes a long way toward making combat more precise and, given that we'll have a very large number of combos, it makes the fighting possibilities much deeper than they previously were.

We discussed having Rayne ride a motorcycle and thought it would be fun, but decided to focus our efforts on expanding upon and improving the core gameplay instead of devoting resources to creating a major mini-game.

> "BloodRayne can now use horizontal and vertical poles to her advantage..."

Thought of any new ways to feed?
Let's just say there will be more spectacular ways to finish feeding. We're implementing a series of fatality moves that add an extra dimension to her feeding. In one particularly nasty one, BloodRayne cleaves her victim down the middle from head to groin.

[illegible] budget, both time and [illegible] like for the second game?
We have a larger budget and more time to make BloodRayne 2 than we had for the original.

Will you be using the same engine?
Yes. But we are making so many improvements to the Internal Engine that by the time BloodRayne 2 launches, it will feel like a different engine in many respects.

You could have easily bump mapped more of the Xbox game last time out. Will you dress-up the Xbox game further this time around?
We plan to use normal mapping to make veins, muscles and details stand out and look more realistic. We also plan to use higher resolution textures for the Xbox.

Will the new game have a similar structure? Any more or less platforming? Will BloodRayne possess any new jumps or tricks to pull herself up?
More platforming than before, however we're minimizing the "annoyance factor" usually prevalent in platforming games. She won't be able to pull herself up over edges per se, but she can use vertical and horizontal poles for combat and navigation as previously described. She'll also have a new double jump and a wall jump that is rather catlike.

The sensory aspects of the first game worked very well. Will they be the same?
Pretty much, though we have plans to improve the look of Aura Vision and give it a greater purpose in the game. We have also removed Extruded Vision (her sniper scope view) in favor of a more useful power. In addition to these changes, BloodRayne will also gain a variety of other supernatural powers as the game progresses like enhanced Blood Rage and Bloodstorm, the latter of which will be as gruesome as it sounds.

How about making her feet conform to sloped surfaces and stairs. Have you [illegible]?
We're definitely working on how our model interacts with the environment so it's more [illegible].

Well, you have an immense responsibility. BloodRayne is an amazing new franchise with implications of greatness. Good ol' luck!
Thanks! We're excited about the sequel and are working hard to deliver a top-notch experience for gamers.

Hibana

Nightshade

Incept Date: February 2004

Famous For: Lightning-fast tale combinations that drop all surrounding enemies in a series of fully-animated blows, wall running and extraordinary agility.

The game: Nightshade begins where Shinobi ends as a new rift opens, sending demons pouring onto the streets of Japan. Where Shinobi blended a spot of platforming with ninja action, Nightshade promises an emphasis on diverse locales and more fighting action to showcase Sega's nimble new Kunoichi.

System: PlayStation 2 **Developer:** Sega Overworks
Publisher: Sega

Three Questions

Masahiro Kumono Chief Director, Overworks

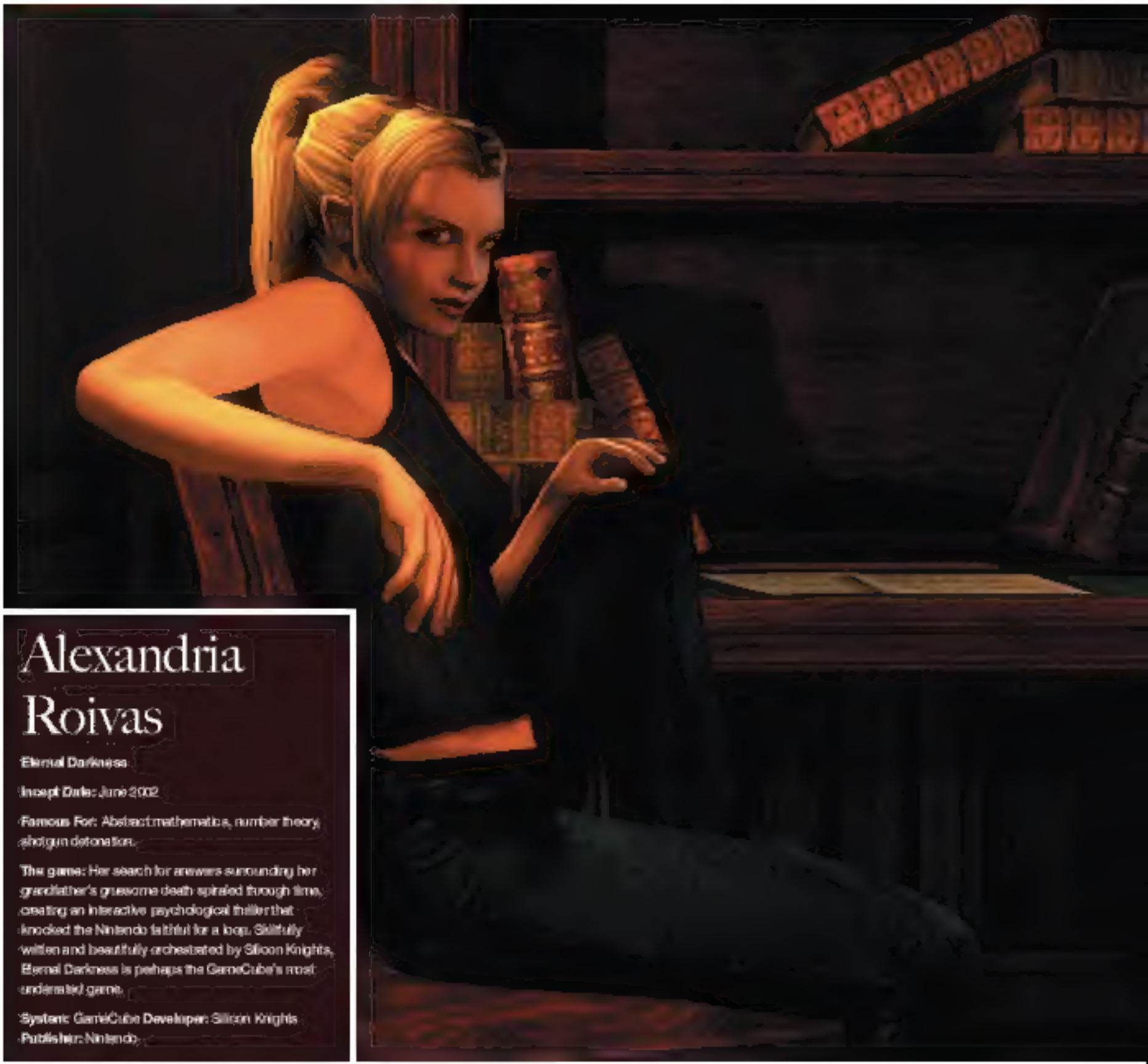
What do you feel is the single most important aspect of character design?
The most important thing is to create an impressive and unique silhouette by including the extraordinary strangeness to the users.

What are you most proud of regarding Hibana?
I think we succeeded in painting a vivid picture of a modern ninja with great character and originality.

Your favorite character ever (from any game)?
My favorite all-time character is Ninja Princess (from an old Sega game).

"I think we succeeded in painting a vivid picture of a modern ninja with great character and originality."

Masahiro Kumono Chief Director, Overworks



Alexandria Roivas

Eternal Darkness

Insept Date: June 2002

Famous For: Abstract mathematics, number theory, shotgun detonation.

The game: Her search for answers surrounding her grandfather's gruesome death spiraled through time, creating an interactive psychological thriller that knocked the Nintendo faithful for a loop. Skillfully written and beautifully orchestrated by Silicon Knights, Eternal Darkness is perhaps the GameCube's most underrated game.

System: GameCube **Developer:** Silicon Knights **Publisher:** Nintendo

Three Questions

Denis Dyack President/Designer, Silicon Knights

What do you feel is the single most important aspect of character design?
When creating Alex, we saw the most important aspect of the character was her believability. For her to work in a horror game she had to be both vulnerable and capable. With this in mind, we started creating a character that is attractive but has a normal breast size. She needed to be intelligent, so she became an undergraduate in Mathematics at University. She was designed not to be a superhero, but psychologically, Alex is the strongest character. Even though she is amongst the youngest, and physically weakest, she has the most courage and resolve. This being said, we still wanted her to be appealing. This was definitely not the norm for character design.

What are you most proud of regarding Alexandria Roivas?
The fact that we created a female lead character that would not make the first cut on Bay Watch.

Your favorite character ever (from any game)?
John Keats from the Hyperion Series—not a game but a great book!
Keyser Soze from The Usual Suspects—not a game but a great movie!
Sephiroth from FFVII if I had to pick a game.

"When creating Alex, we saw the most important aspect of the character was her believability."

Denis Dyack President/Designer, Silicon Knights

Beyond Good & Evil

Incept Date: October 2003

Famous For: Saving her world, one snapshot at a time. Jade is the ultimate thinking man's (and woman's) heroine—smart, athletic, cunning and a master of the martial arts.

The game: Michel Ancel's (creator of Rayman) crowning achievement, Beyond Good and Evil ranks among the greatest action/adventure games ever created—a seamless world full of wonder and cinematic gameplay that transforms you through its fantastic world.

System: GameCube, PlayStation 2, Xbox
Developer: Ubisoft **Publisher:** Ubisoft

"She exists on her own now – she is not a puppet; she has a soul like a real person."

[illegible]

Three Questions

[illegible]

[illegible]

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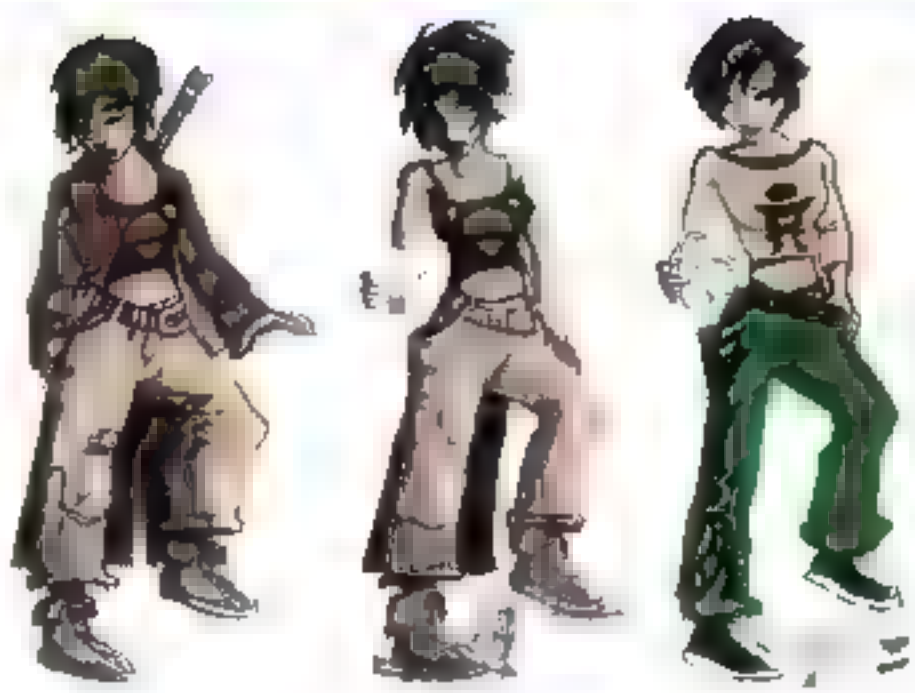


Vanessa Z. Schneider

[redacted]

[redacted]

Famous for: Exquisite acrobatic finishing moves and the ability to fire energy blasts through her palms via a [redacted]

The game: An action/shooter with elements of platforming and precision acrobatics. PN 03 is the perfect marriage of dexterity, throbbing techno, and a highly intelligent mechanized enemy. A truly beautiful and inspired work of science fiction.

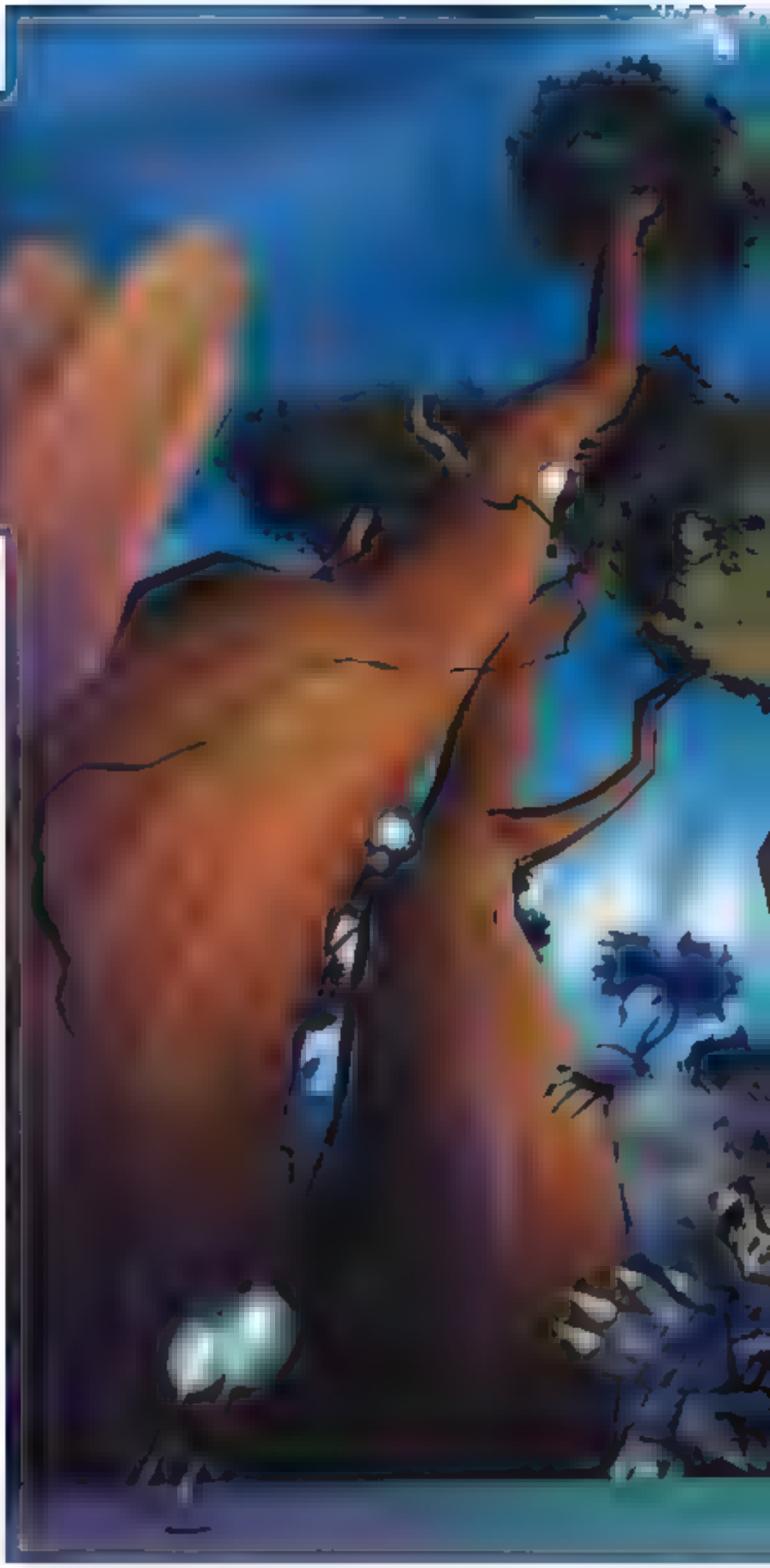
System: GameCube **Developer:** Capcom Production Studio 4 **Publisher:** Capcom

"I'm really proud of Vanessa's style and movements."

Three Questions

Hiroyuki Kobayashi Producer, RN03

What do you feel is the single most important aspect of character design?
The character must be compelling and have a sense of excitement and energy in them.
What are you most proud of regarding Vanessa?
I'm really proud of Vanessa's style and movements.
Your favorite character ever (from any game)?
I would say that Regina, from the Dino Crisis series, is my favorite character.



Three Questions

Gilles Bendo Art Director, Kya

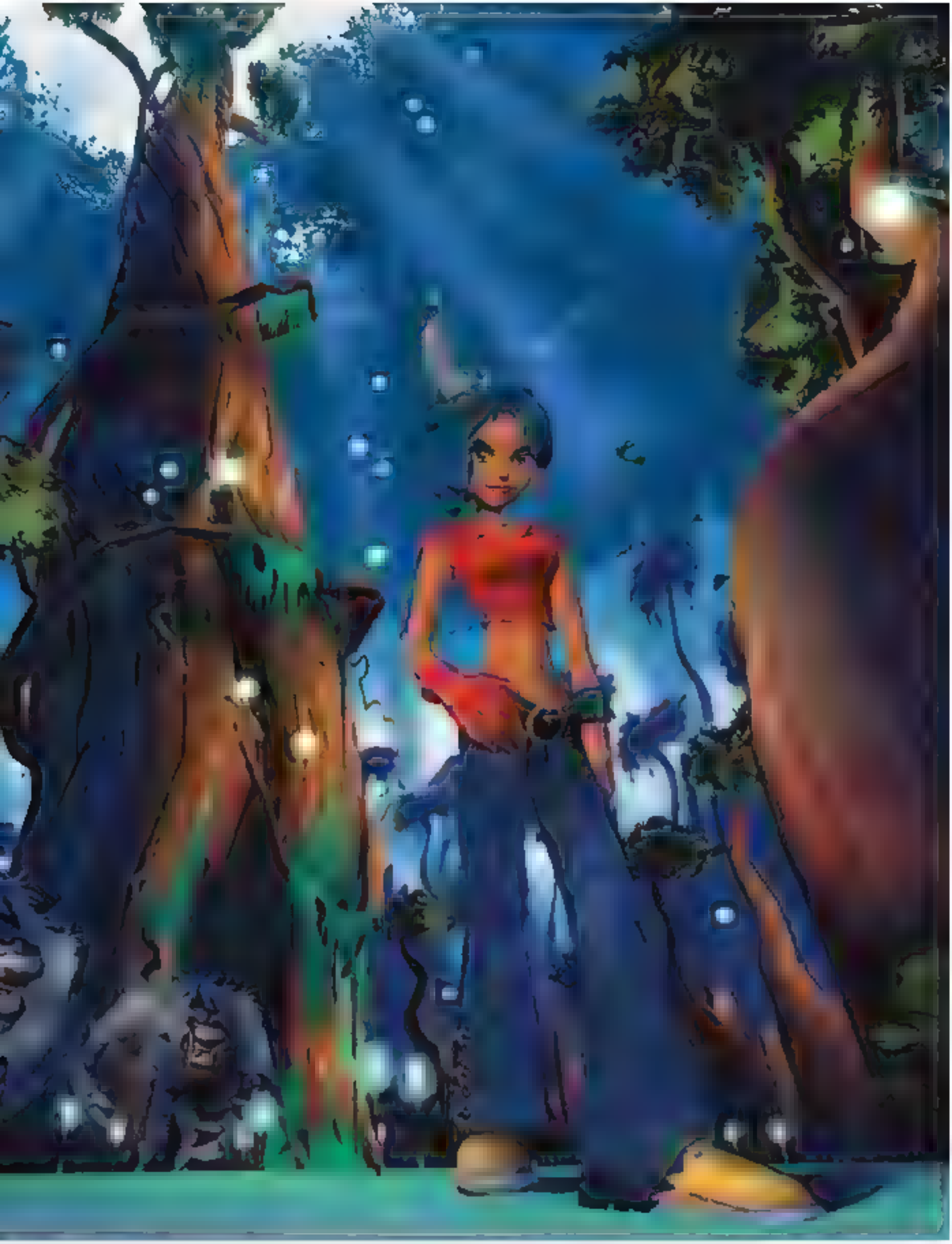
What do you feel is the single most important aspect of character design?
I think the single most important aspect of character design is to create a character in harmony with the world he lives in, the things he'll have to do, the contact he must have with other people around him, etc. Everything in him must be according to his particular universe and not be too typed, so that anyone could accept him as his avatar; the character must be "arrodit" and yet have a real personality.

And to know if a character is the right one, you must see him move. Animation is what will complete his design. When drawing a character, you have to see him in action and change him until he's credible when moving.

What are you most proud of regarding Kya?
I think Kya is sexy but not vulgar; trendy but not fashion-victim, strong but not body-built, smart but not arrogant, pretty but not bimbo... Her weapon becomes a jewel, her jeans slap in the winds, her moves are arrodit and dynamical, her hair is blue because of the storyline but also will balance her other colors... Everything in her matches with the world she lives in. She's just the girl we wanted to play with in the universe we created.

Your favorite character ever (from any game)?
My favorite game character is the little Mario and the Yoshi he rides in "Yoshi's Island." It's not only the character, but especially the "hand-drawn" look of him (and this "him" is double: Yoshi AND Mario) in the whole game. Playing this game, you can feel that he was perfectly designed for it and looked really cool

> "When drawing a character, you have to change him until he's credible when moving."
>
> **Gilles Bendo Art Director, Kya**



Jen

Primal

Incept Date: March 2003

Famous For: Shape-shifting on the fly and somehow maintaining her sense of humor and cool, having been yanked from a night club into a parallel universe by a flying stone gargoyle.

The game: A ground-breaking effort by Sony Europe's Cambridge Studios at creating a seamless fantasy where the story unfolds around you and everything in the world is governed by the laws of realistic physics. The end result was a game of immense beauty and integrity, helping pave the way for more of its kind, and hopefully a lot more of Jen, one of the most endearing female leads you'll ever have the pleasure of knowing.

System: PS2 **Developer:** Cambridge Studios **Publisher:** Sony

Three Questions

Chris Bonell Creative Director

What do you feel is the single most important aspect of character design?

That a character makes an impression on you. I think this is true for all forms of storytelling, whether you're reading books, films or games. Games tend to be a little unusual in that, a character needs to be really cool, really evil, really sexy—whatever it's character has no impactful or memorable qualities, then the player won't care what happens to them and probably won't care about playing the game.

What are you most proud of regarding Jen?

We set out to make her sexy but not tacky—something not often achieved in games. By focusing as much time and effort on her personality as her looks—her swagger, her voice acting (beautifully by Heather Unold), her relationships and interactions with other characters—I think we achieved this.

Your favorite character ever from any game?

Before tough cool I think you'd be hard pushed to find a more beautiful interplay than their interactions are handled. I'd have to say Lara's pairing of Ion and Yorda. Yorda's put a magical quality to the game and a big part of it is down to the unique relationship between these two characters and the essentially elegant way this is shown in the game.

"We set out to make her sexy but not tacky."

Chris Bonell Creative Director

Paine, Yuna and Rikku

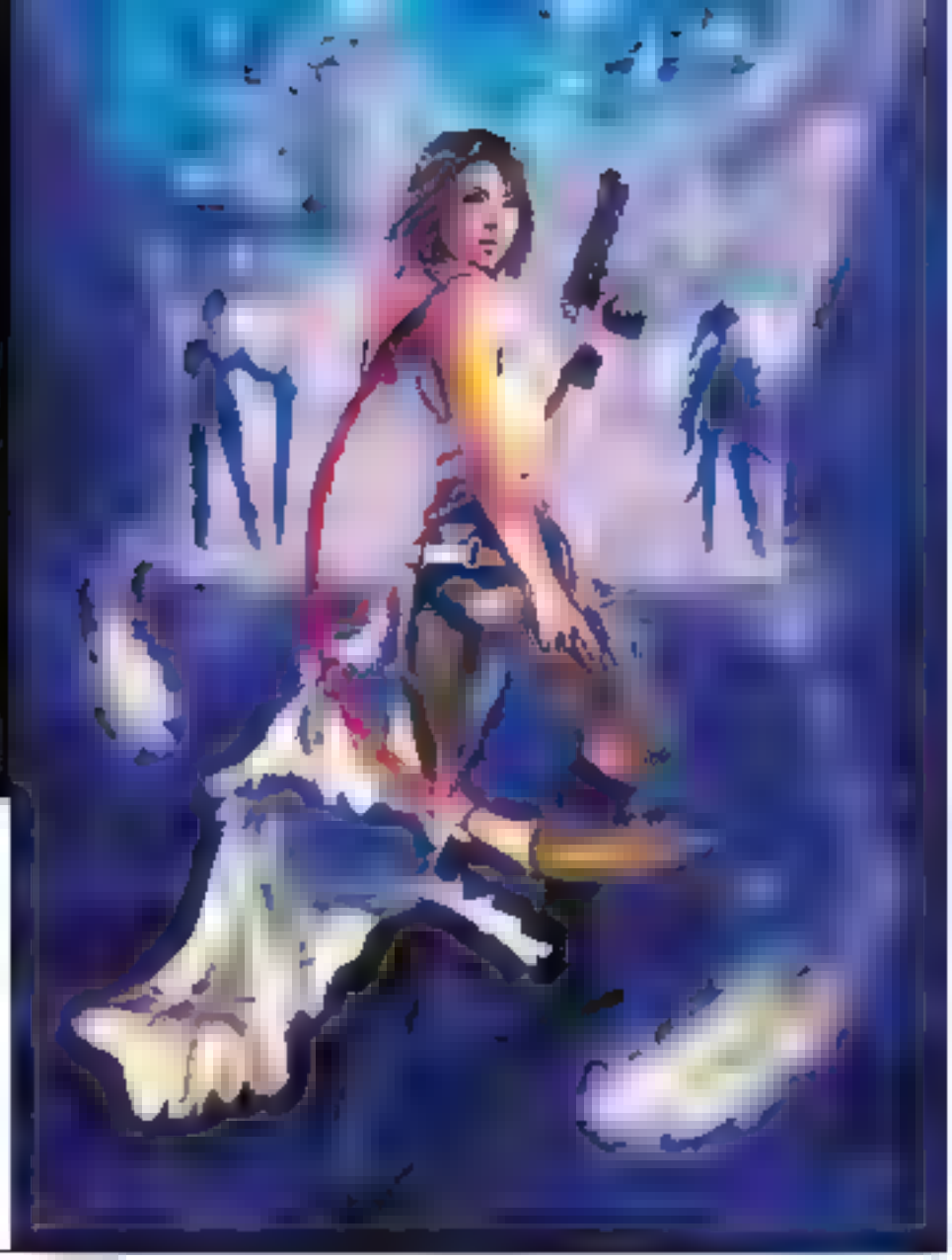
Final Fantasy X-2

Invalpt Date: November 2003

Plotline: Post-Sphere hunting. As members of the Gullwings, the girls touch down all over Spira in search of Spheres—glowing orbs that contain recordings of historical events. For being the high summoner and savior of the people, Yuna (also a pop star) is enchanted (actually humble, polite and soft-spoken, while Paine is strong and silent—the trio's rock—and Rikku is just nuts.

The game: X-2 is all about firsts for Square. It's the first direct Final Fantasy sequel, the first to be mission based and the first with an all-female cast. It's also, of course, skillfully produced, illegally beautiful and wholly engulfing.

System: PlayStation 2 **Developer/Special Publisher:** Square Soft



Three Questions

Tetsuya Nomura Chief Character Designer, Final Fantasy X-2

[illegible]

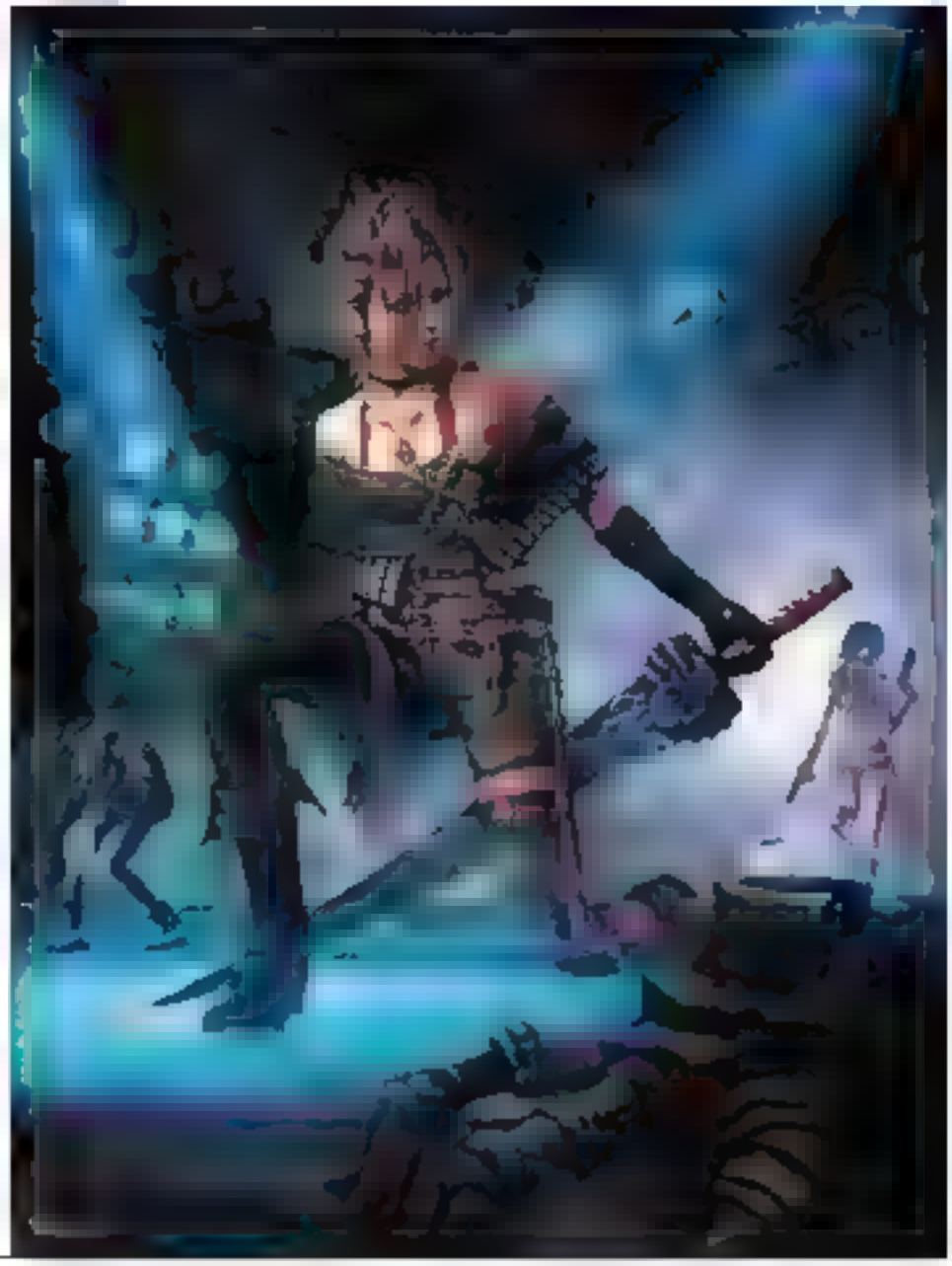
Not limited to character design, but this applies to anything I do (as a director and designer)—and that is to bring out something that not only meets expections, but surpasses everyone's expections.

What are you most proud of regarding the girls of X-2?

The fact that our development team was able to give "life" in a very attractive way to each of the three girls.

Your favorite character ever (from any game)?

Sora, from Kingdom Hearts.



"...this applies to anything I do—and that is to bring out something that not only meets expections, but surpasses everyone's expections."

Tetsuya Nomura Chief Character Designer, Final Fantasy X-2

Ursula

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

System: PS3, Xbox 360 Developer: LucasArts
Publisher: LucasArts

Three Questions

Robert Blackstein Director

What do you feel is the single most important aspect of character design?

It is most important to capture the personality needed by the story in the character design. We begin by writing down key words that describe the character; is she heroic, evil, shallow, selfless, youthful, exuberant, etc.? Then I scan the Internet for people and faces that capture the feel I need for the character; finally I take all these ideas and work with a concept artist who brings their ideas and we go back and forth until we get the right look. Ursula went through four distinct looks before we settled on our strong Nordic hero. The last stage in the character modeling where yet another artist brings ideas and suggestions to the creative process is not over until the character is in the game.

What are you most proud of regarding Ursula and the females in Sheikah?

We managed to make beautiful yet strong characters by using design, modeling, texture, sound, voice and animation. So they look unique and believable, we wanted them to be the equals of our male warriors and I think we succeeded.

What is your favorite character ever (from any game ever)?

Lil Valentine. I'm a sucker for sassy games in the first place, but add a sassy hero blasting zombies and I'm hooked for good. I'm anxious to see how the next movie comes out.

"...Ursula went through four distinct looks..."

Robert Blackstein Director

Ailish and Buki

Sudeki

Incept Date: TBA 2004

Fanzone: For Being a royal bad-ass. Princess Ailish is the last hope for a dynasty in decline and, although royally, not afraid to fight for what she believes in. Buki, a warrior from a small province being overrun by the pervading darkness that threatens both of their existences, fights by her side.

The games Ailish and Buki (along with two male counterparts) are set to fight side by side in the Xbox action/role-playing event of 2004, Sudeki.

System: Xbox **Developer:** Climax **Publisher:** Microsoft

"It's sexuality informs the whole character creation process."

Max Martin Lead Artist, Sudeki

Three Questions

What do you feel is the single most important aspect of character design?

Definitely personality. Personality informs the whole character creation process. It defines physical proportions, costume, how a character walks and talks, everything right down to what they like for breakfast. The most successful characters create a lasting impression of what or who they are, whether it's a beautiful princess, a cute cartoon animal or a hideous monster in a bone armor.

What are your most proud of regarding the girls of Sudeki?

Apart from their stunning good looks, they are also very good adventurers. We are using some very dynamic facial animation and lip-synching technology. When you talk to Ailish, she behaves in a very human and believable way. There's a lot of subtlety in how she talks and expresses a range of different emotions.

Your favorite character ever (from any game)?

Dexter from Jak and Daxter. It's rare that a game character actually makes you laugh but Dexter is a classic comedy sidekick.

Lisa & Christie

Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball

Incept Date: January 2003

Famous For: The most seamless and realistic in-game models so far in the annals of 3D gaming.

The game: Intuitive volleyball smash with cinematic angles, pop music and gorgeous animation, [illegible] poolside frolicking. Girl power for boys of all ages.

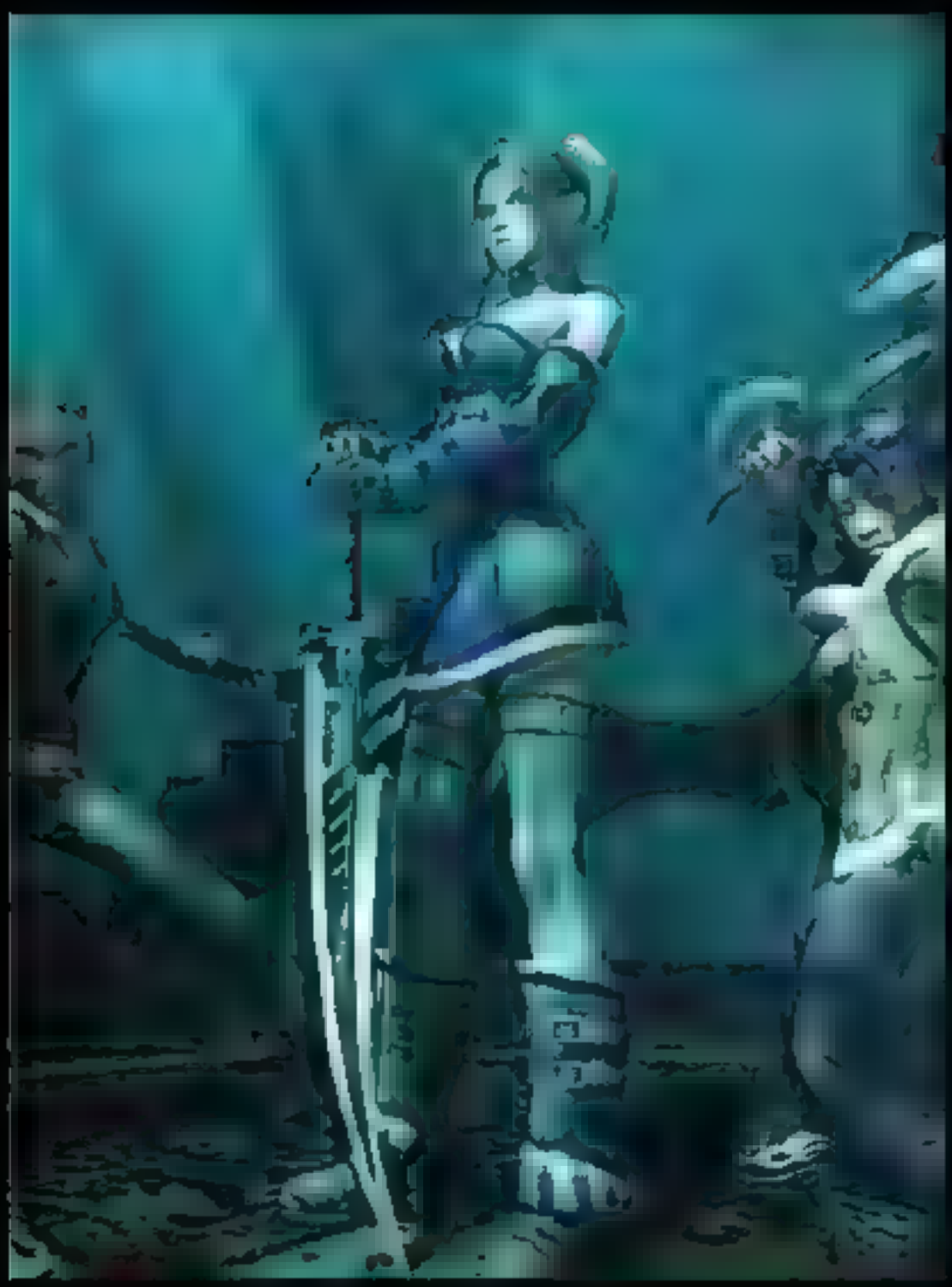
System: Xbox **Developer:** Team Ninja **Publisher:** Tecmo

Speaking to Ragaid about his amazing creations for DOA XBV, he came across as almost humbled by the praise, which is quite uncharacteristic. I got the feeling he could have worked on them forever. When I commented on how well he was able to portray details like armpits and knee joints (extremely difficult bits of anatomy to correctly render), I couldn't remember a Japanese designer ever seeming so happy to hear that a particular feature was appreciated outside of his mind. He also spoke of using the girls in yet another extreme sports game, alluding to, of all things, dodge ball. I'm game, as long as he leaves Rodman and his cheesy alter-ego on the cutting-room floor.

"The most seamless and realistic in-game models so far..."

Kaylie

Hunter the Reckoning: Redeemer
Insert Date: October 2003
Famous For: Vengeance by way of a massive blade. Kaylie's parents were brutally murdered 10 years prior by a gigantic demonic teddy bear, and now she's down with the reckoning, having joined the ranks of the "enhanced." The Game: A top-down action-shooter spiling over with lumbering ghouls and crawling undead abominations, as well as werewolves as unlikely allies. Redeemer is the best this pen-and-paper RPG-derived series has seen thus far due to its fast gameplay, nicely integrated CG cinemas and, of course, Kaylie.
System: Xbox Developer: Interplay Publisher: Interplay



Three Questions

Matt Corso Lead Artist Hunter The Reckoning: Redeemer

What do you feel is the single most important aspect of character design?
To me the most important aspect of character design is to choose shapes, colors and details in your design that can visually describe your character's personality to the audience. I personally prefer to begin designing a character after the character's personality has been established. From there, I begin to choose clothing styles, accessories, colors and even weapon choices based on what I already know about the character. I prefer that the details on the character make sense in some way. Deuce's new design, for example, features small guards along his forearms and lower legs. I added these because in many ways it makes sense. If a thousand monsters a night were gunna [illegible] myself. I also like to consider how the characters complement one another and their environment. I decided that many of the Hunter's weapons and clothing probably came from the same source. Some modern-day weapon-smith probably made their equipment for them and their clothing would need to be designed for speed and defense.
Another goal was to try to choose designs that give the player a feeling for what type of character they are about to play as, or fight against, from the moment they take a look at them. I also had to keep in mind that the characters would need to be immediately recognizable from a camera that was 30 feet away. When your characters need to look good from up close as well as from far off, there is a lot to consider in the type of design that you're going for.

What are you most proud of regarding the women of Redeemer?
The thing I'm most proud of is the fact that I didn't need to put the women in a thong to make them dynamic game character designs. The women of Hunter are for the most part fully clothed, and they are still still attractive. Kaylie is pushing it a little, but when you consider her past, you'd probably go a little wild yourself. I personally would like to see more women playing games so I make a conscious effort not to exclude them by letting my characters make the statement that "this game is really not for you." If we can all keep this in mind, then perhaps one day I'll be able to get my wife to play something other than Animal Crossing.

Your favorite character ever from any game?
My favorite character ever would easily be Link from the Zelda series. I love every version of the character featured in his past games. I even loved the 'toon-shaded version from Wind Waker which I felt perfectly captured the essence of the character in just a few simple lines. Perhaps I love this character so much because of his design: classic, simple, heroic. Or perhaps I just love the classic games that he represents. But either way, he's the best as far as I'm concerned. Oh, and by the way. I know this is a little late, but while I have the public's attention: variety is the spice of life. He's 'toon shaded...get over it!
And remember, play Redeemer. Because if the poor, tortured people of Ashcroft don't make it this time, it's your fault. No time to think about it, just go kick some ass!

> "...when you consider her past, you'd probably go a little wild yourself."
> Matt Corso Lead Artist

TIFA ティファ

年齢20歳。
持ち前の明るさで、パーティーの仲間たちを
勇気づける前向きな女性。
カワイイ顔に似合わず己の拳のみで敵と闘う
格闘術の使い手で、反神羅組織『アバランチ』の
主要メンバーの１人でもある。
クラウドとは幼なじみで、彼に少なからず好意を
抱いているが口にはだせずにいる。

Final Fantasy VII

Insert Date: September 2006

Famous For: Arguably the most adored female in recent FF history, her hostess Tifa is also second-in-command of a rebellion-called Avalanche. She is also bright, bubbly and lethal with her fists.

The game FF VII was both the series' introduction to 3D and its first outing away from Nintendo—making its debut on the PlayStation—to much to the amusement of the gaming world. The result was the most anticipated PS game of all time and best Final Fantasy ever created. This is the one that should have spawned the sequel (although I love X-2) and a movie, if for no other reason than to see Jennifer Love Hewitt as Tifa.

System: PSOne **Developer:** Square **Publisher:** Sony

ILLUSTRATION / NOMURA TETSUYA.

Leeza X

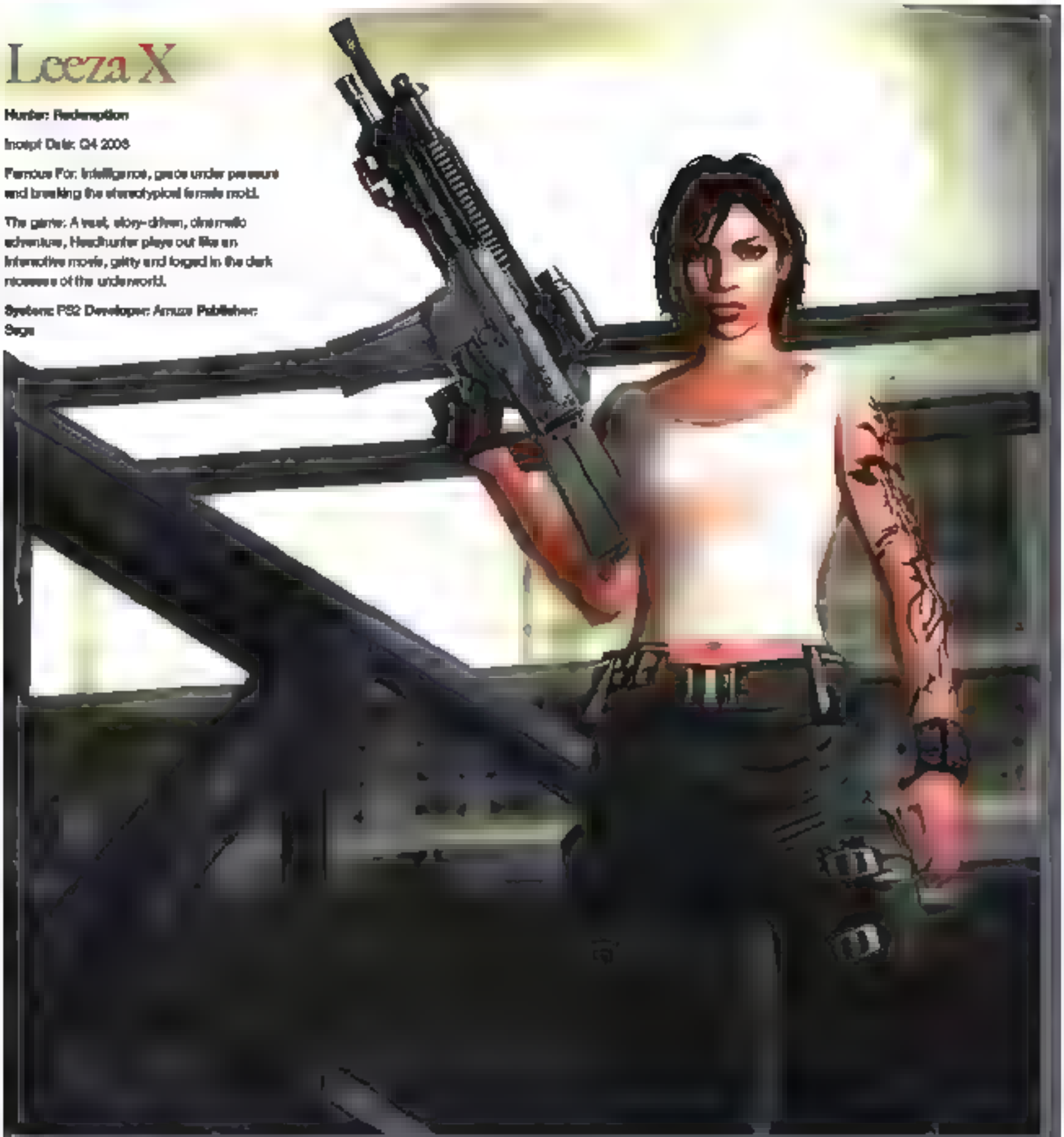
Hunter: Redemption

Incept Date: Q4 2006

Famous For: Intelligence, grace under pressure and breaking the stereotypical female mold.

The game: A neat, story-driven, cinematic adventure, Headhunter plays out like an interactive movie, gritty and forged in the dark recesses of the underworld.

Systems: PS2 Developer: Amuze Publisher: Sega



Three Questions

John Kirkouse, Executive Producer & Director (Amuze)

What do you feel is the single most important aspect of character design?

[illegible] ourselves as to deny access for character and personality.

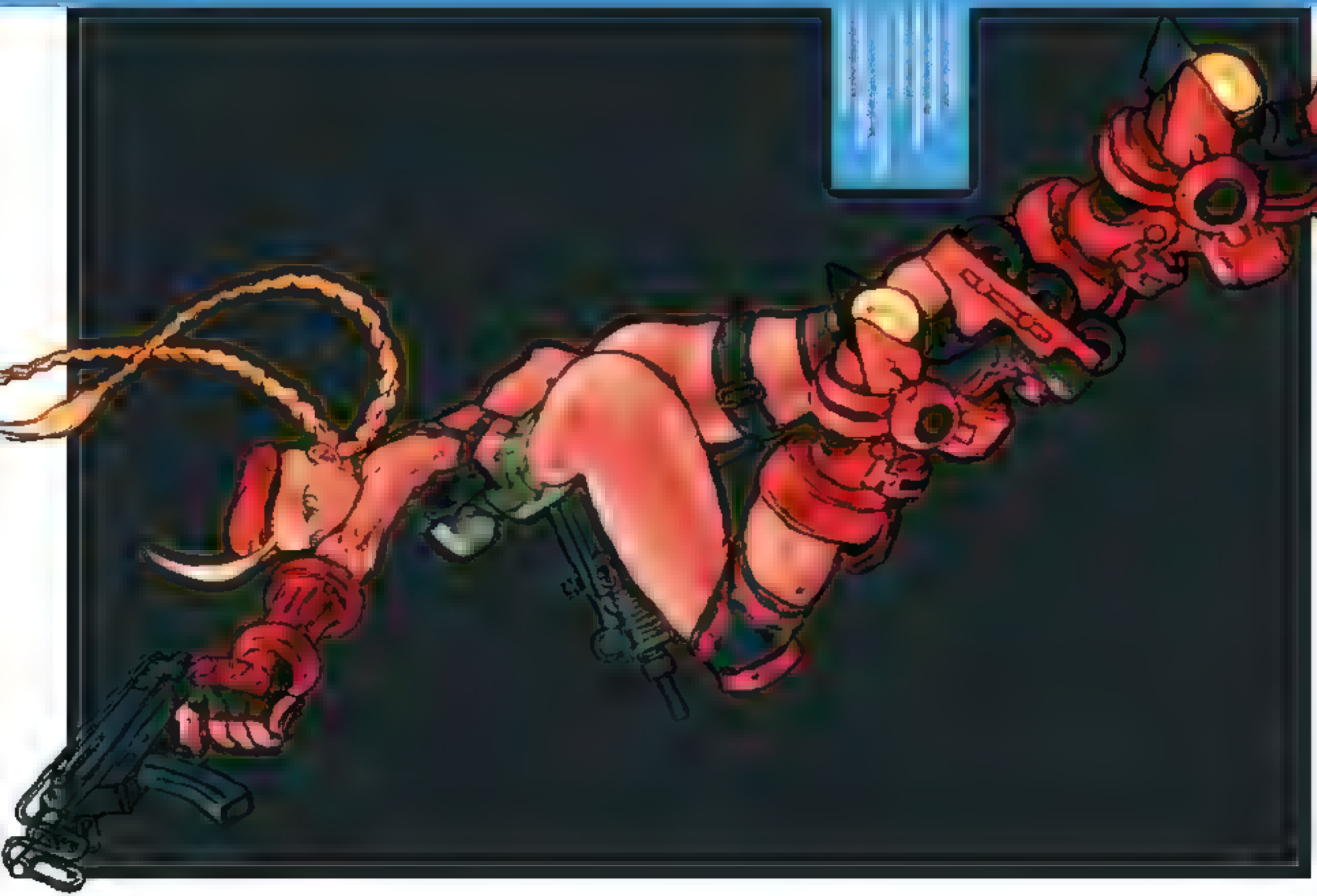
What are you most proud of regarding the girls of Headhunter?

[illegible] leave room for other factors than only visuals.

Your favorite character ever (from any game)?

[illegible]

DOA girls, (from DOA Beach Volleyball [sic]) all very nicely designed over-the-top characters.



Ivy & Taki

Soul Calibur II

Incept Date: August 2003

Fanboy Fit: Arguably the finest female in all of 3D fighting. As anyone who's had the pleasure of manipulating Cassandra, Xianghua, Tira or Ivy (especially Ivy) will tell you, there's nothing quite like it.

The game: A marriage of character design and precision control so astute it rivals the best 2D fighters in an almost impossible test of 3D prowess.

System: PS2, Xbox, GC **Developer:** Namco **Publisher:** Namco

Three Questions

Hiroaki Yotoriyama Producer

What do you feel is the single most important aspect of character design?
Before creating a character design, firstly, we decide what kind of movement this character will have. For instance, will this character use two Japanese swords (katana), will he be able to move very fast, have a specialized kick movement, etc.?

What are you most proud of regarding the girls of Soul Calibur III?
Although I know that these girl characters are not actually human, we are proud that these characters seem to live inside the Soul Calibur II world as if it is real and they are really human.

Your favorite character ever from any game?
I don't have a specific favorite... However, I like all characters in which the character's movement matches the character's look, and the player is able to control him/her comfortably—that is what makes a great character.

"...these characters seem to live...as if it is real and they are really human."

Hiroaki Yotoriyama Producer

Dizzy, May, Jam and Millia

Guilty Gear X2

Incept Date: February 2003

Famous For: Some of the godliest hard-drawn art ever rivaling Capcom and SNK the women of Guilty Gear are among the most fluid and beautiful creatures to ever grace a versus fighter.

The game: The war of the "Gears" (biologically engineered humanoid weapons of the 22nd century) versus the Sacred Order of Holy Knights continues in X2 with trademark hooks like Psych Burst and the Burst Gauge.

System: PS2 **Developer:** Arc System Works **Publisher:** Sammy

Three Questions

[redacted]

What do you feel is the single most important aspect of [redacted] design?
It's important that when the characters are seen in silhouette they are easily recognized. I make sure the designs don't deviate from the GGX worldview for all cultures. I make sure when one sees the character design, they can have a rough understanding of the intended characteristics. The design also reflects the importance of the backbone of each character, and part of me is always distributed into this backbone. Finally, making sure the users are not bound by my design and detail set-up and that the character is user friendly is also something I consider important. Everything I've stated here, they are all equally important to me.
What are you most proud of regarding Guilty Gear?
It is difficult to say if I am proud of this, but all the characters are a part of me. They are residents of the game world and live a short life so they do not need to be completely universal characters. But changes in the way I think make me seek new answers for each character's life I create. They are heroes and I am proud of their values, which extend from the same ones I myself pursue.
Your favorite character over (from any game)?
Ken from the Street Fighter series and Lara Croft. Sorry, but I could not select just one.

"It is difficult to say if I am proud of this, but all the characters are a part of me."

[redacted]

Nagi, Uranus and Marvel

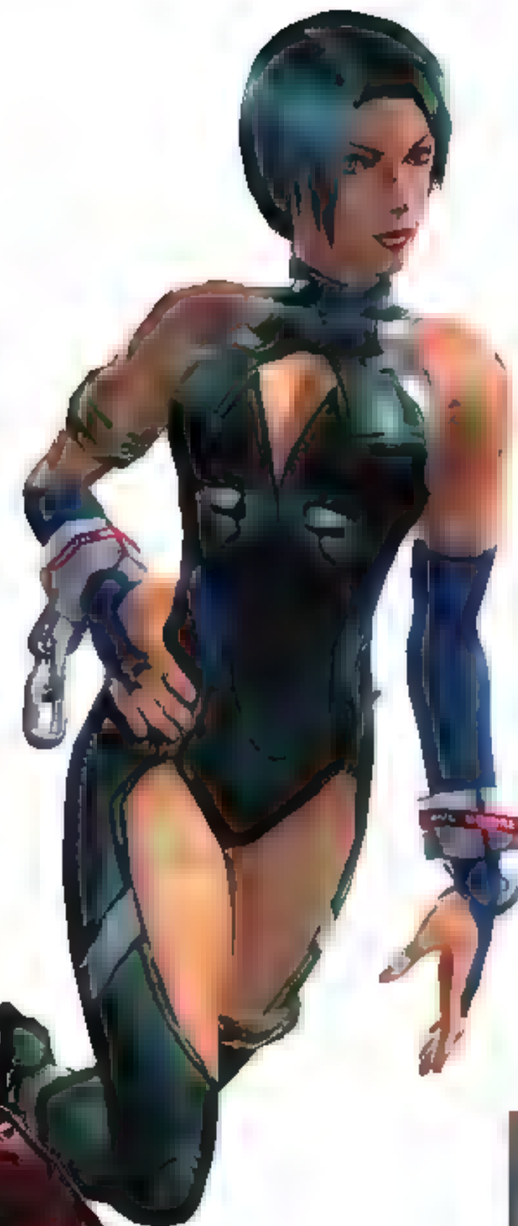
Bloody Roar 4

Incept Date: October 2001

Ferocious Fun: You won't like them when they're angry. Set off the girls of Bloody Roar and they transform into hairy beasts, just like French women.

The genre: 3D fighting with all of the superhuities and the added element of "hyper-beast" transformations. A versus fighting mainstay since the mid-90s, Bloody Roar is Hudson's contribution to the encyclopedia-thick annals of 3D fighting.

System: PlayStation 2 Developer: Eighting Publisher: Hudson/Konami



"I love the coolness, prettiness and amorousness that she portrays."

[illegible]

Three Questions

[illegible]

Cammy & Chun Li

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

Felicia & Morrigan

Darkstalkers

Incept Date: July 1994

Famous For: Morrigan and Felicia unified the haunting with the erotic, along with a previously unseen level of animation and creature design.

The game: Another banner 2D fighting franchise from the maelstrom of the craft, this time doused in monsterism.

System: Arcade, Saturn, PSOne **Developer:** Capcom **Publisher:** Capcom

Vanessa, Pai & Sarah

Virtua Fighter 4

Famous For: Introducing the PPK gameplay style, the only other technique accepted by serious fighting enthusiasts. With VF4, mainstays Pai Chan and Sarah Bryant were joined by Vanessa Lewis, a grappler with a

The game: What began as the human equivalent of lumber has become one of the most beautiful 3D fighting games in the world. Its latest incarnation, Evolution, is considered by many the finest fighting game ever made.

System: Arcade, PlayStation 2 **Developer:** Sega AM2 **Publisher:** Sega

Three Questions

Hiroshi Ohta Designer, Virtua Fighter series

What do you feel is the single most important aspect of character design?
The most important elements are the physical form and style of combat.

What are you most proud of about the girls of Virtua Fighter?
I'm partial to the fashion in which Akira wears a kimono.

Your favorite character ever (from any game)?
Sorry, I cannot choose any one character in particular.

"The most important elements are the physical form and style of control."

Hiroaki Ohba Designer, Virtua Fighter series

Kitana

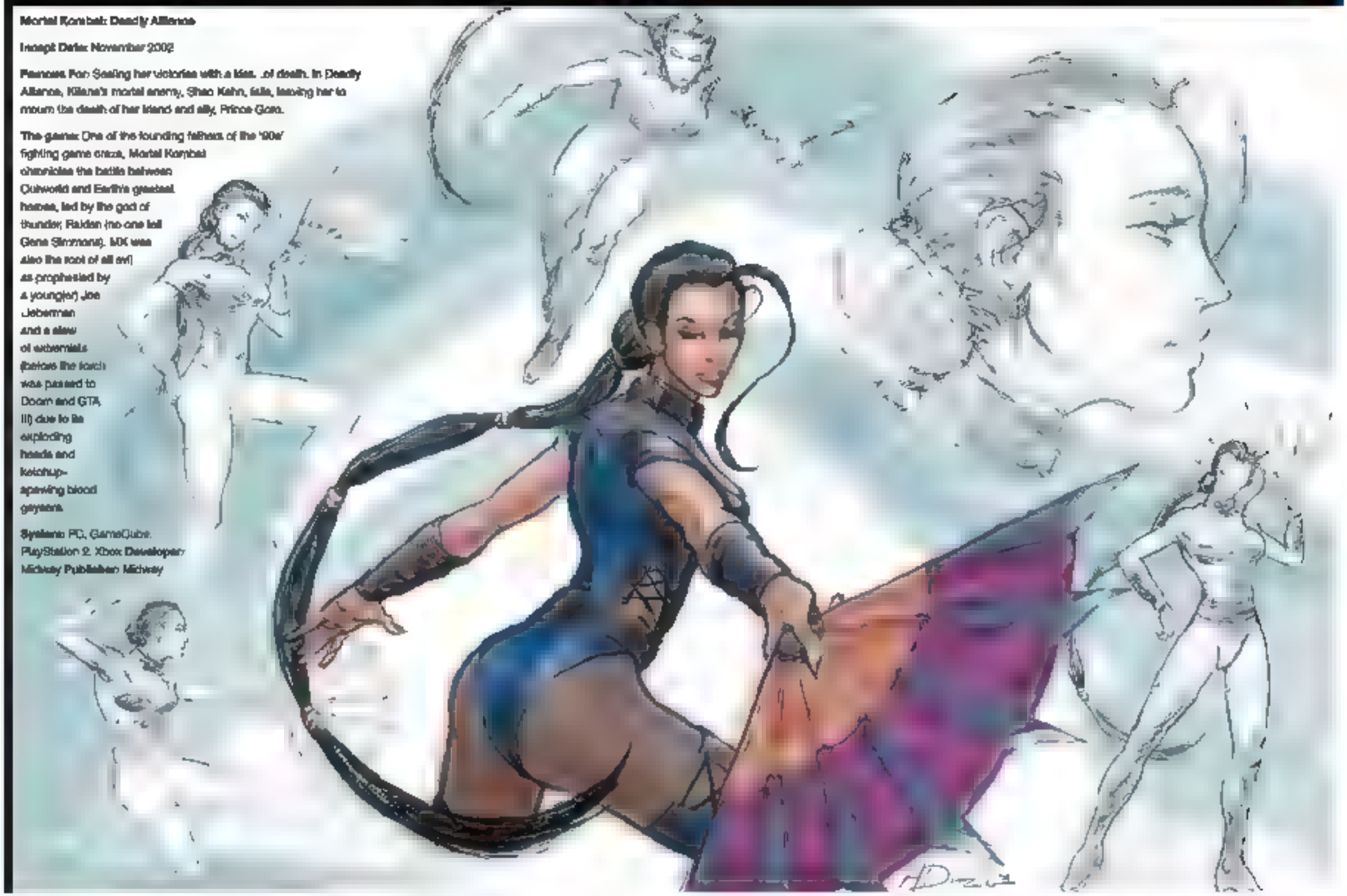
Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance

Insert Date: November 2002

Famous For: Sealing her victories with a kiss...of death. In Deadly Alliance, Kitana's mortal enemy, Shao Kahn, falls, leaving her to mourn the death of her friend and ally, Prince Goro.

The game: One of the founding fathers of the '90s' fighting game craze, Mortal Kombat chronicles the battle between Outworld and Earth's greatest heroes, led by the god of thunder, Raiden (no one tell Gene Simmons). MK was also the root of all evil as prophesied by a younger Joe Lieberman and a slew of extremists (before the torch was passed to Doom and GTA III) due to its exploding heads and ketchup-spewing blood geysers.

System: PC, GameCube, PlayStation 2, Xbox **Developer:** Midway **Publisher:** Midway



Nova

Starcraft: Ghost

Incept Date: TBA 2004

Famous For: The essence of stealth but strong, Nova is rigged with the highest tech and attacks with lethal precision, her trademark Ghost sniper rifle slung on her back in case of emergency.

The game: Blizzard doing action and stealth with a female lead in the Starcraft universe. This is the franchise to watch in 2004 with a strong female lead ripe for crossover stardom and a developer known for tuning to perfection.

System: GameCube, PlayStation 2, Xbox. **Developer:** Blizzard/Nihilistic **Publisher:** Vivendi Universal

Maarten Kraalvanger Art Director Nihilistic Software, Inc.

What do you feel is the single most important aspect of character design?
I feel the most important aspect when designing a game character is establishing a clear and distinct silhouette. In games, a character needs to be instantly recognizable from both a distance and close up regardless of the lighting in the room. With Nova, we designed her to have a strong athletic-yet-feminine silhouette that players will recognize right away, with her trademark Ghost sniper rifle slung on her back.

What are you most proud of regarding Nova?
We are especially proud of the strong physical presence that Nova's design projects without sacrificing her feminine side. She is both deadly and beautiful.

Your favorite character ever (from any game)?
One of my favorite characters of all time is actually Sarah Kerrigan from the original StarCraft. She might have only been a small sprite on screen, but her character came to life as you played the game and followed her dramatic transformation.

In the end, the physical design is only a small part of the overall impression a character makes. Voice, movement, and attitude can usually do much more than physical appearance. With Nova, we did our best to make her as fleshed out and interesting as possible so that she comes alive as much as her predecessor did in the original StarCraft.

> "We are especially proud of the strong physical presence that Nova's design projects..."
>
> **Maarten Kraalvanger** Art Director Nihilistic Software, Inc.

Hana & Rain

Three Questions

Stan Liu President and Lisa Farina Designer

What do you feel is the single most important aspect of character design?

For character-centric games, compelling characters can make or break the game. Characters need to have some kind of identifying mark or personality trait that is unique and memorable. They need a personal goal, challenges, tragedies, triumphs, loss and gain. Much like a book, characters need a definite personality and definition beyond a stereotype or an archetype.

In action games, player characters need to have extraordinary abilities. The characters need to fulfill players' most heroic or villainous fantasies. The characters need to be able to do what players cannot do on their own. However, a degree of frailty or weakness humanizes the character, giving it a sympathetic dynamic.

What are you most proud of regarding Hana and Rain?

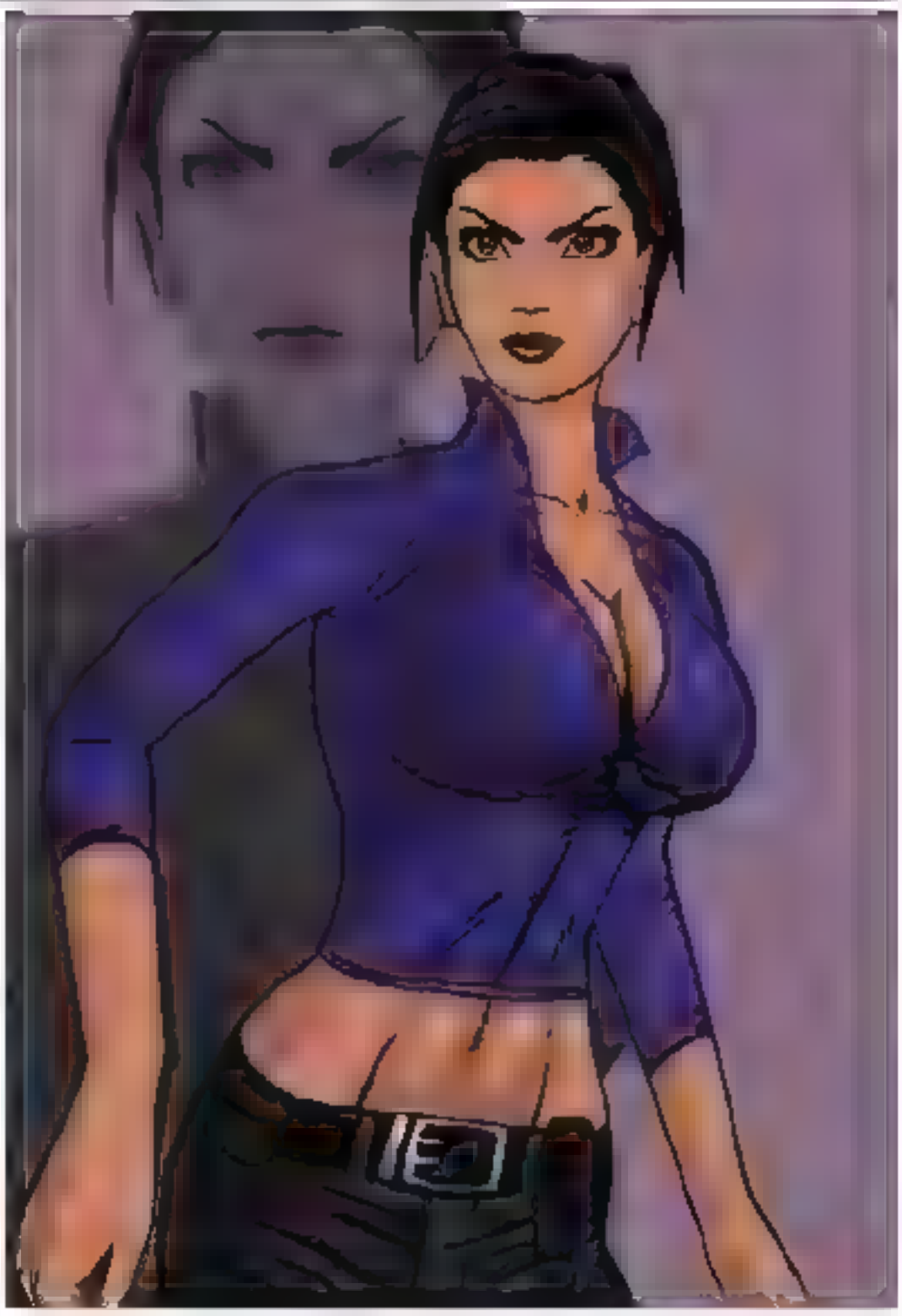
Hana and Rain had broken all traditional rules on what video game (especially female) characters are all about. I designed Hana and Rain to be as REAL as possible. They have real emotions and depth. Mostly, I'm proud of the fact that they are not afraid of being who they are and how they express their feelings.

Your favorite character ever (from any game)?

Hana and Rain.

"The characters need to fulfill players' most heroic or villainous fantasies."

Stan Liu President and Lisa Farina Designer



Ice & Aska

By Chris

Except Date: Q1 2006

Premise: Fen Ice is a fun-loving weapons expert and Aska, a martial arts master (with ego to burn). Together they fight cyber crime in a future governed by a single OS...and it's not Microsoft.

The game: Pick your poison, then dive into the net for some covert ops of the VR kind, or fight for justice in the real world by stealth or force; a cyber-bounty-action-thriller with Matrix-ish implications.

System: PlayStation 2; Developer: Konami; Publisher: Konami

"When a female character's level of skin exposure is high, both male and female users will tend to view that character as stupid or dumb."

— Shinsuke Makai | Cy Girls Character Designer

Three Questions

Shinsuke Makai | Cy Girls Character Designer

What do you feel is the single most important aspect of character design?
With female characters, I would say controlling the amount of nudity while still providing sufficient sex appeal.
When a female character's level of skin exposure is high, both male and female users will tend to view that character as stupid or dumb. Covering up poor content with excessive nudity may sell with one segment of users, however, this is likely to alienate those of normal sensibilities. In addition, users who are in the market for nudity will feel alienated if the nudity is not strong.

Having both the game content and design to be too serious from start to finish can result in an uninteresting game. But in certain cases, when the main characters do require a serious design, it is important to have some level of playfulness apparent in the designs of the sub-characters.

What are you most proud of regarding the Cy Girls?
Most Japanese games recently tend to follow the Hollywood sci-fi or Japanimation design style. However, our aim with Cy Girls was to provide a refreshingly simple yet functional design style. One that wouldn't leave the user wondering if it was too excessive or trying to determine what it was based on. Compared to most sci-fi games of late, the hairstyle and costumes in Cy Girls are easy on the eyes. The women's bodylines appear cleaner because the designs are uncomplicated, creating an especially sexy, feminine hipline when they crouch down. This is very important with this game system because the player character's rear silhouette is visible to the user throughout a majority of the gameplay.

Your favorite character ever (from any game)?
Ayane from 7 Blades (KOEI; title not released in North America).

Nikki Connors

Rogue Ops

Concept Date: October 2003

Famous For: Sneaking up behind terrorists and snapping their necks like pretzels, when she's not shooting them in the head and dragging their bodies into closets.

The game: Gearbox's first bewitching female stealth star does a nice job in her console debut, a game that incorporates every gadget in the book along with a compelling scenario in which to use them.

Systems: GameCube, PlayStation 2, Xbox **Developer:** Ritual Studio Ltd. **Publisher:** Kemco

Three Questions

Dylan Sonic Art Director, Rogue Ops

What do you feel is the single most important aspect of character design?

For me, the single most important aspect of character design has to be individuality. Let's face it, if your character is not an individual, then it's derivative, and that's not a good start. By making the character different from all that has gone before, you can give him/her their own space and their own place in the consumer's mind. This is much harder to do today than a few years ago. For instance, you want to create a superhero character, well, how the heck do you make a new one without copying something that has been done before? (I mean, how many more male characters can we have?) Video games also have their well-known characters, and trying to bring something new and different and yet recognizable is the most important and toughest thing to do.

What are you most proud of regarding Nikki Connors?

When we started working on Nikki, we had a ton of different people to please and a lot of goals. We were trying to create a new character that people can recognize, that has her own style, unique abilities and attitude. At the same time, she had to be attractive, but not too much, look different than other game characters, but not too much, and still be a believable woman that the player could care about. I think we've achieved all these things with Nikki. She has her own look, her own attitude and, if I can say so, is attractive without being too supermodelish.

Your favorite character ever (from any game)?

Tough question. I have a ton of favorite characters from all different kinds of games. Obvious choices would be Mario, Yoshi and Donkey Kong (all Nintendo old-school). I loved the characters in several of the Final Fantasy games both from a visual standpoint and also from the dialogue/backstory. Heck, I still have fond memories of my characters I created in games like Ashron's Call and Dark Ages of Camelot (not really game characters, but they are to me). But if I have to throw out just one, it's probably got to be Samus of Metroid fame. Now I'm talking back on the SNES. I loved the way she got more powerful during the game, had cool moves, looked a ton of ass and never complained about anything.

However, that could just be the retro gamer in me speaking. I guess if I had to narrow it to recent years, then how could I not name Nikki Connors? (If I didn't, someone would kill me!)

Ayame

Three Questions

Mitsuo Kodama, President and Lead Character designer, K2 Ltd

What do you see as the single most important aspect of character design?

The single most important aspect of character design is to draw something that is unorthodox and yet will stand the test of time.

What are you most proud of regarding Ayame?

I am most proud of the balance of innocence and valiance that we were able to capture in Ayame's character design. She is at an age, 22, where she is starting to emerge from her innocence and see the law world. I am also proud of how she looks in her costume and how it fits with her design. Most female characters her age would seem out of place with such a dark, heavy black costume.

Your favorite character ever (from any game)?

Ryo Kennagi in King of Fighters '94. He is the most popular character from all of the games that I've made. It's been 18 years since his debut and I am still attached to him.

> I am most proud of the balance of innocence and valiance that we were able to capture in Ayame's character design.
>
> Mitsuo Kodama, President and Lead Character designer, K2 Ltd

Hawk
Brute Force
Release Date: May 2008
Weapon Fer: Being nearly impossible to detect. And if you see her, you're as good as dead. No one will have you scream either, since she's equipped with a Powerblade designed to silently eliminate her enemy.
The game: Digital Anvil's skillfully crafted game of team warfare strikes the perfect balance between being tactical and fun, with four distinct character types you can choose on the fly while giving specific commands to the rest of the squad. Another seriously underrated Xbox game.
System: Xbox One; Digital Anvil; Pub: Microsoft
Three Questions:
Eric Roberts Producer
What do you feel is the single most important aspect of character design?
Creating their personality. This guides everything else you do, from visual concept to final character.
What are you most proud of regarding the girls of Brute Force?
Bringing the characters to life, beyond them just being eye candy.
Your favorite character ever from any game?
Gaylorch Threepwood.
"Personality guides everything else you do, from visual concept to final character."
Eric Roberts Producer

Nadia

[redacted]

[redacted]

Famous For: Nadia grew up in a rough urban area with no parents and few friends, stealing and foraging for money and food, until the Brotherhood came to town and changed her life forever. Now she's crackin' heads and taking names in the forbidden zone.

The game: Post-apocalyptic kill or be killed. Top-down and beautifully detailed, Fallout takes place in a future wasteland teeming with depravity—from psycho mutants to rogue machines. A lot like downtown LA.

[redacted]

Three Questions

Chuck Guerra Product, Fallout: Brotherhood of Steel

What do you feel is the single most important aspect of character design?

There was an article by Toby Gard where he quoted the rule "the game comes first." I would absolutely agree with that. In Brotherhood of Steel's case, we wanted to design characters that evoked the kind of feelings that would match the setting of the game. The characters were designed with the same dark, dirty, and a bit exaggerated (sometimes even humorous) sensibility that we tried to give to the entire game.

Take Armpit, the bartender in our run-down, one-spigot-watering-hole-at-the-edge-of-the-wasteland, just trying to eke out a living and not get shot while doing so. When I read the description, the image of a sloppy, dirty, weathered, crass old fart came to mind. From the concept stage to the final voice-over processing, we wanted to get that character across to the player, something that makes you laugh and cringe at the same time—like Dennis Franz with a lung infection and hygiene so bad it kills flies, serving you a home-made beer in a glass that he washed out with his spit. In the end, it's about getting something across to the player in the service of the entire game experience.

What are you most proud of regarding the women of Fallout Bo8?

They're all tough, most of them outright sex-kickers. We wanted to distinguish the female characters by making them attractive and strong by comparison to the men around them. Even the infamous Betty Page dominatrix outfit matched with the direction of all the females in the game—the character isn't just wearing the outfit as a fetish, she's actually a dominatrix who rules over a large gang of male thugs (and a few females as well).

Your favorite character ever (from any game)?

Kerrigan from Starcraft. Kind of odd that my favorite player is more cinematic in essence than in gameplay, but I have always been fascinated by the creepy/sexy and Blizzard did a great job with her.

> we wanted to [redacted] evoked the kind of [redacted] match the setting of the game.
>
> Chuck Guerra Product, Fallout: Brotherhood of Steel

Lucia

Genre: Shattered Soldier

Intrept Date: October 2011

Fantasie for: Pumping lead (fire, grenades...) into post-apocalypse prey. Isolate while watching Bill Rear's back, the most notorious criminal in Earth's history and its only hope for survival. Lucia's a cyborg designed to be the ultimate soldier.

The Game: Hunter-Killy's only hope against extinction—once again battling the notorious Blood Raiden—is fought in one of the most hard-core side-scrolling action titles from Nasa in all of gaming; a precision action-dance that demands cat-like reflexes and nerves of steel, the pay-off for which is an unforgettable spectacle of both sight and sound. Contra: 3B is a heavy metal hit or be hit-and-die hit death battle with no quarter... pure brutality.

System: PS3 Developer: NCE Tokyo Publisher: Konami

Three Questions

Nobuyuki Nakamura, Producer

What do you feel is the magic in distinguished aspects of character design?

A character design that is well matched with the game concept, where the player can feel empathy for the character or feel as if the player is drawn into the world or strongly feels the character's experiences. Nowadays, we see more games using cinematic approaches in their presentation. The game designers tend to think more importance on storyboards—to make the presentation closer to an actual movie. This is not saying the cinematic approach is wrong, but since the video game is the ultimate form of interactive entertainment, every aspect of the game should be equal to one another. For example, having extremely detailed characters when the actual gameplay is presented in a different art style will take players out of the gaming experience, leaving them with the impression that they are alienated from the game. If this happens, the character design is unsuccessful. Gamers should easily distinguish between the design and the game.

What are you most proud of regarding Lucia?

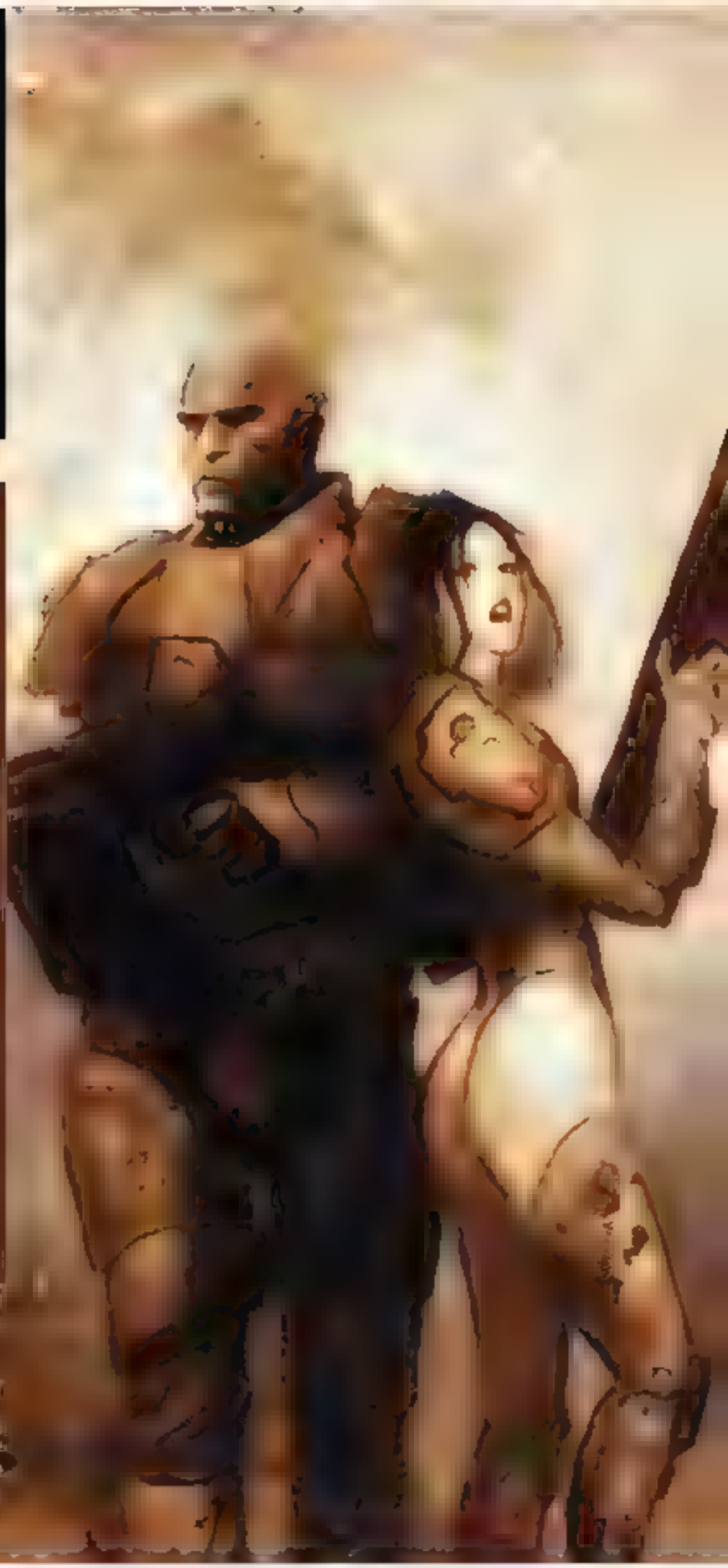
Even though Lucia is a female character, she is masculine and cool. Lucia's character is based on Shattered Soldier, the female Bill Rizer. We designed it to be a big, strong, macho girl. We balanced Lucia's motion and look very elegant so that she easily stood out when placed next to actually Bill. However, as a game like Contra, if the heights of the 3P or 3D characters are different, it affects the smooth direction of the gun aiming and other gameplay factors. The game difficulty would naturally be different for both players. Our solution in the design was to dot Lucia as big as Bill by equipping her protector onto her shoulder. In the end, both characters worked out well in the game design.

Your favorite character aside from any gem of

Mika Hakki from the game called "Twilight Syndrome" on the original PlayStation. When it comes to female game characters, designers tend to over-emphasize the feminine qualities, such as maternity or self-sacrifice character types. However, Mika's character was more like a real person—a girl that you could find everywhere in reality. I was impressed by the script because it made me feel so human.

"Even though Lucia is a female character, she is masculine and cool."

(Nobuyuki Nakamura, Producer)



Samus Aran

Metroid Prime

Uncapt Date: November 2002

Fetish Fact: Being the hottest babe in gaming that you've never seen. Aside from her beautiful face and flowing blonde locks, Samus remains gaming's greatest mystery. She is also the founding female of console gaming and the keeper of arguably the greatest moment in 8-bit gaming history.

The game: Our 2002 Game of the Year, Metroid Prime is nothing short of a modern miracle. Not only did an American start-up (Retro Studios) manage to create a bumbling-worthy 3D sequel of a 2D legend sculpted by one of the founding fathers of gaming (Shunpei Yokoi) who tragically passed away in October 1997), but they pulled it off as an FPS, a format primed for disaster.

System: GameCube **Developer:** Retro Studios **Publisher:** Nintendo

Kelly O'Lenmey

GunValkyrie

Incept Date: March 2002

Famous For: The best boost-and-hover gameplay this side of a bughunt, and a euphoric level of speed and grace that somehow emanates through the cumbersome "Gearskin" she wears on her upper body.

The game: One of the best action games ever made. In a perfect world, GunValkyrie would be a million-seller, and Smilebit, Japan's most celebrated developer. As it is, however, only the most elite gamers subscribe to its tough-as-nails gameplay, a ballet of sight, sound and dexterity that never leaves you once you've traversed it. A rite of passage of sorts reserved for the best of the best—to love this game is to be at the very top of the video game food chain.

System: Xbox **Developer:** Smilebit **Publisher:** Sega

"Her upper body is mechanic, so we made her lower body as feminine as possible."

Yuichi Ide Senior Artist, GunValkyrie

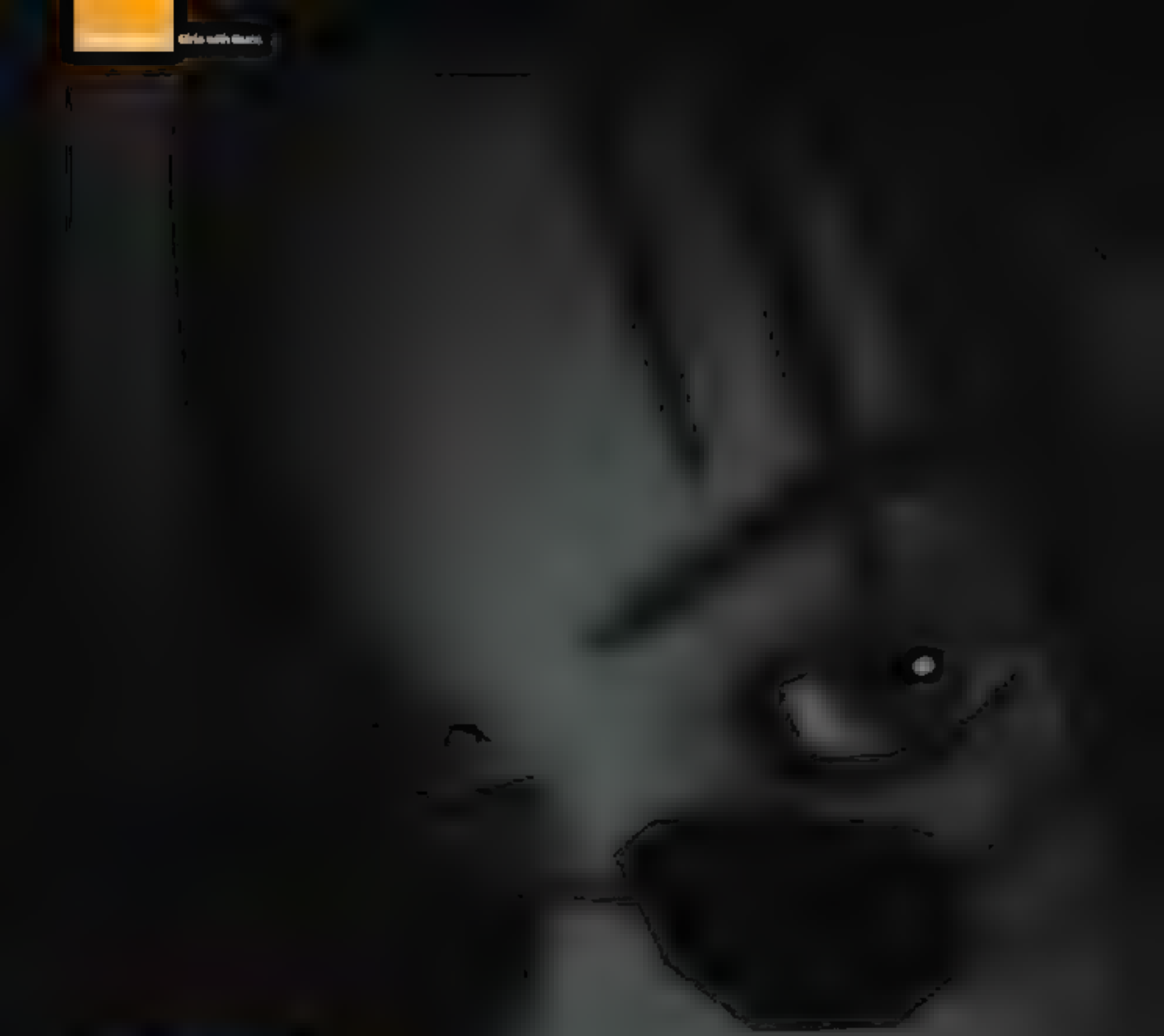
Three Questions

Yuichi Ide Senior Artist, GunValkyrie

What do you feel is the single most important aspect of character design?
It is most important that players have fun controlling the character.

What are you most proud of about Kelly O'Lenmey?
Her upper body is mechanic, so we made her lower body as feminine as possible, both for character model and motion. I believe that this was a success.

Your favorite character ever (not my game)?
Lara Croft, of Tomb Raider. This is the first character whose very movement could create a physical attraction.



Lara Croft

Tomb Raider

Incept Date: October 1996

Famous For: Big bazooks, twin revolvers, acrobatics, assorted gadgets and an alluring take-no-prisoners attitude. Gaming's ragging dive brought new meaning to the phrase "fortune and glory," earning both for Eidos Interactive and its once-elite studio, ailed Core Design.

The gamer: Tomb Raider was a veritable revelation—the first 3D game with real depth, drama, event-driven cutscenes, arrangements and environmental puzzles. The latest, Angel of Darkness (rushed through testing to make a date), is Lara's second-best (only slows, minor bugs and loading issues aside).

Systems: PS, PS2, DC, PC, Saturn, GBC, GBA **Developer:** Core Design **Publisher:** Eidos

In memory of...

Jeremy and Adrian Smith (president and VP of Core, respectively) weren't available to comment on the creation and evolution of Lara, as they were so stung by the press on Angel of Darkness. They hadn't set foot back in their studio as of mid-October 2006, so I offer this having known them since 1991:

I remember sitting with Jeremy in his tiny booth at CES '93 like it was yesterday, laughing out loud as he half-jokingly described (per only little card) a female fortune hunter with big boobs, an absurd notion for the time. A decade later, that once-small shop is ground zero for Circa control, and now, apparently, the wheels have finally come off. Over the years, I have coaxed Jeremy to return to the company's roots, making games like Chuck Rock, Son of Chuck, and WonderDog—the fun, innovative platformers that put them on the map—but he's been content to keep cranking out Tomb Raiders, along with the odd side project like the quirky (but cool) Swagman, the forgettable Fighting Force, and perhaps the most underrated game on the globe today, Hardy Gardy.

In bringing Lara to PS2, Core spared no expense designing an elaborate, hyper-detailed adventure awash in old-school Tomb Raider difficulty (for which they generously added a lock button, making it impossible to fall while setting up a jump), a wonderfully integrated story and all of the trademark moves (and then some) their fans love along with a stunning new model. Forced to ship the game early, however, they missed a few minor bugs and had to centralize some slowdown into areas where it wouldn't affect gameplay, but otherwise they thought they had created a new adventure worthy of the franchise that fans would enjoy. Then the press attacked and seemed to revel in the opportunity to call the game and Core to bite. As a result, the Lara we've come to know and love, quirky multi-button control, charming quirks and all, is gone forever, placed in the hands of Crystal Dynamics where she'll likely evolve but never be quite the same.

Ducking into the review site I frequent for research, the initial reviews prior to the bad press were overwhelmingly 7s to 10s until the onslaught hit, and with it the jokey low scores derived from bits of bad reviews describing the final moments of the game. What a strange send-off for gaming's premiere female lead. And I thought Hollywood was tough.

"Tomb Raider was a veritable revelation—the first 3D game with real depth..."

Lucia

Devil May Cry 2

Incept Date: January 2000

Famous Fan: Starring in a sequel that fans of the original saw as disappointing. Yet, the mood and evolution of Lucia were so appealing, it made it easy to ignore the fact that you could beat the game without dying once. The girl is a dream to control.

The game: A Gothic masterpiece by way of haunting melodies, stunning architecture and exquisite animation. More open and less-linear than its predecessor, and not nearly as sentimental, Devil May Cry 2 offers Mondo style scenes in a haunting, angelic universe.

System: PlayStation 2, Dreamcast

Original Publisher: Capcom

Ashlin

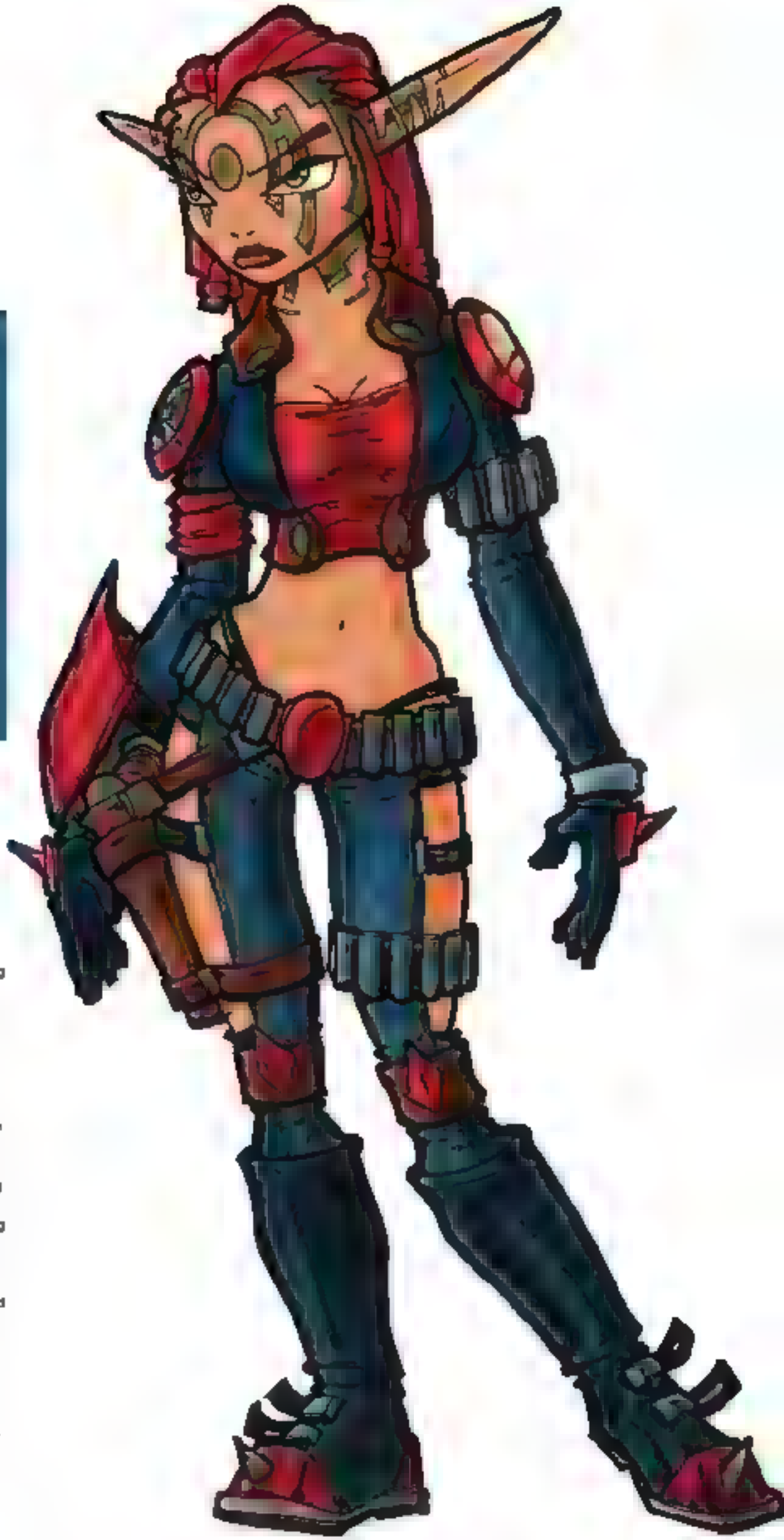
Three Questions

Xxxxxxxxx

What do you feel is the single most important aspect of character design?
I believe it is a solid understanding of anatomical structure, followed by the ability to simplify and exaggerate. The process for me is rarely flash-of-lighting inspiration. It's typically working and reworking fast and sketchy, and seeing what little mistakes will lead to more interesting silhouettes. The old cliché which says that you have to know the rules before you can break them is very important for all aspects design.

What are you most proud of regarding Ashlin and the characters of Jak II?
I'm most proud of the variety in the cast of Jak II, from the tough and sexy Ashlin to the elastic hair Macaw/hair monkey, Pecker. I'm also proud of our success in aging the world and characters without compromising on style and character dynamics. The basic premise was to give Jak II more conflict and a more compelling narrative with more sophisticated character arcs. The design challenge, therefore, was to find a middle ground between the cartoonier and iconic look of Jak 1 and the darker, more mature future in Jak II. I wanted to make sure "older" doesn't mean more realistic.

Your favorite character ever (from any game)?
That's a really tough question. It's the experience of a game, animation or comic book that makes a character memorable, and not just its design. Sonic's design was a great match for his fast movement. Ren & Stimpy will always have a place in my heart. A lot of the Disney stuff is simply masterful.



"The process for me is rarely flash-of-lighting inspiration."

Heather Morris

Silent Hill 3

Insert Date: August 2003

Premise Fear: Luring us into her sick pilgrimage of self discovery, a cornucopia of dead flesh and images so disturbing you'll need therapy for the rest of your life. Now does she look good doing it.

The guest: Not where you want to spend your next vacation. The only reason Silent Hill is silent is because most everyone is dead, save for the unspeakably vile creatures wanting to eat you like a chicken wing.

Systems: PlayStation 2 [Best XCET Peter Kinnard]

Three Questions

Akira Yamaoka xxxx

What do you feel is the single most important aspect of character design?

I think it depends upon to what extent the game player/designer projects himyherself on the character. This is an important point because what players often times see in game characters is a reflection of themselves.

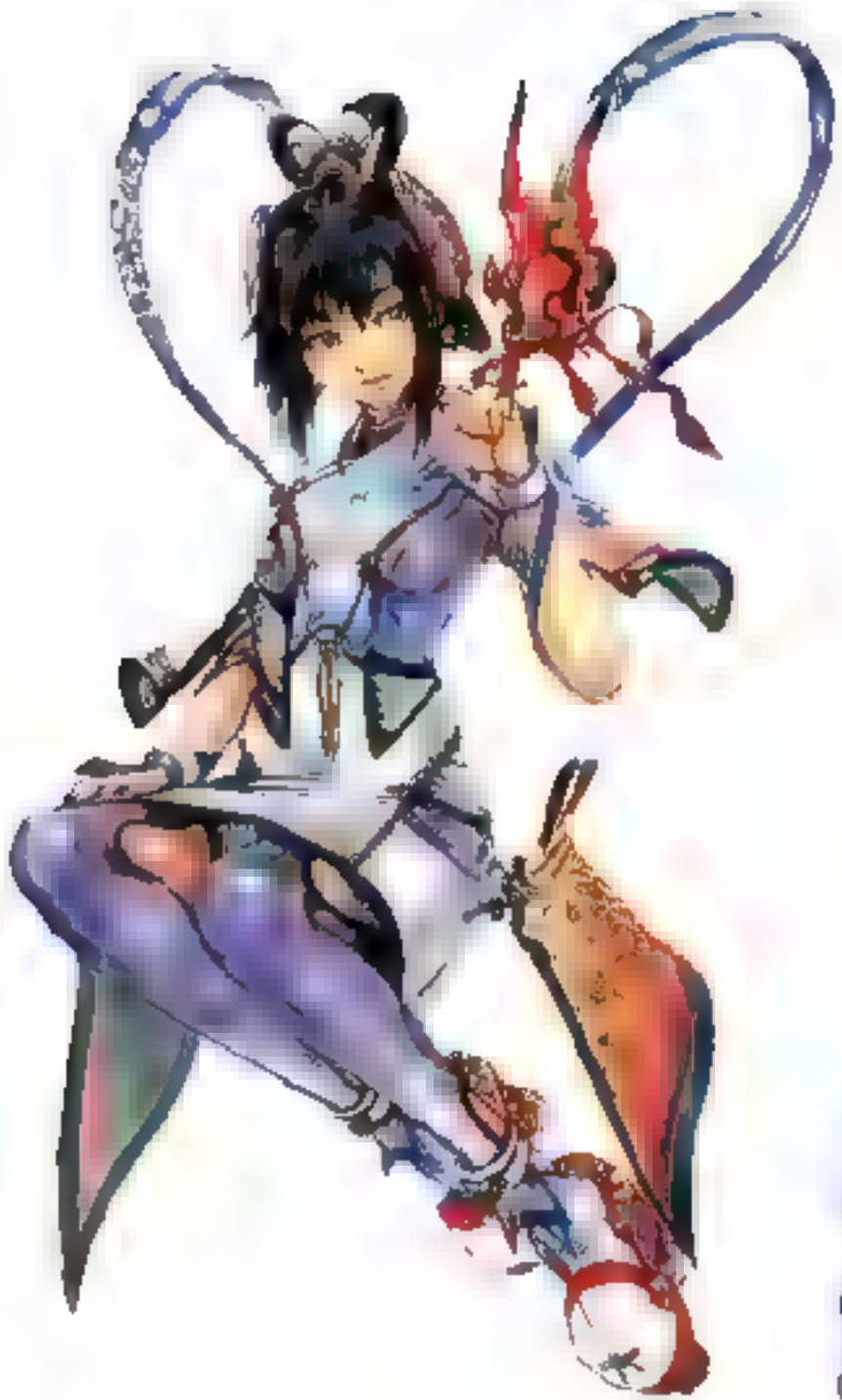
What are you most proud of regarding Heather?

I am proud that Heather is a kind of character who has never been seen in any game before. Of course Heather's high quality design makes me happy as well. As you know, game characters resemble each other quite a bit, regardless of any game title. It seems that a majority of them just come from cartoons, and are not unique. Heather does not have such clarification and she has her own personality and she also shows a peculiar world view in Silent Hill.

Your favorite character ever... (from any game)

It is YUNA from FFX2. ...really like her!

> "I am proud that Heather is a kind of character who has never been seen in any game before."
>
> **Akira Yamaoka** xxxx



Three Questions

Fumito Kozutsumi Producer

What do you feel is the single most important aspect of character design?
The most important aspect of character design is what the role played by the character and the character's power represent, or rather what they conceal.

What are you most proud of regarding the girls of Crimson Sea?
I'm most proud of Live D. A person with such an appearance and the ability to take command doesn't ordinarily exist.

Your favorite character ever (from any game)?
I don't really have one. If I must choose, I'd say Yuna from Final Fantasy X.

"A person with such an appearance and the ability to take command doesn't ordinarily exist."

Arcia

Chaos Legion

Launch Date: August 2003

Famous For: Blending the wining kings of Gothic creature design back to hell with twin chrome pistols blazing, while wearing a crotch-length shirt.

The game: A graphic masterpiece packed and to-and with comic action, fuelled by legions of angelic figures that fight by your side.

System: PlayStation 2 **Developer:** Capcom **Publisher:** Capcom

Three Questions

Rob Prothiner, Chaos Legion

What do you feel is the single most important aspect of character design?

When designing characters, we focus on depicting their identity and each of their attributes very clearly. For example, weapons are one attribute that tells the player a lot about the character.

What are you most proud of regarding Arcia?

What I like about Arcia is that she has the face of an angel but her moves are flamboyant and simply wild at times.

Your favorite character ever (that any gamer)?

Well, for me it will have to be Rebecca Chambers from Resident Evil 0.

"What I like about Arcia is that she has the face of an angel but her moves are flamboyant."

Rob Prothiner, Chaos Legion

Acclaim
VIXEN
Acclaim
Acclaim
Acclaim

Gum & Co.
Jet Set Radio Future
Incept Date: February 2002
Fantastic Fast incorporating hip-hop dance moves into rollerblading and tagging. The girls of Jet Set Radio Future possess a level of mo-pop style that remains (and likely will for a very, very long time) unmatched. To know them is to love them forever.
The game: Another fantastic game that ranks among the best ever, again revived for the elite gamers of the world. JSRF incorporates tagging among vast cityscapes alive with some of the best platforming gameplay of all time, a magnetic soundtrack and a hip-hop-a-gonst-the-man vibe that fuses it into one big celebration of video game culture.
System: Xbox Developer: Smilebit Publisher: Sega
JSRF

"The most important aspect is the creation of living humanity that comes from the design."

Masayoshi Hikoshi Chief Designer, JGRF Ryoko Ueda Senior Artist, JGRF

Three Questions

Masayoshi Hikoshi Chief Designer, JGRF

Ryoko Ueda Senior Artist, JGRF

What do you feel is the single most important aspect of character design?

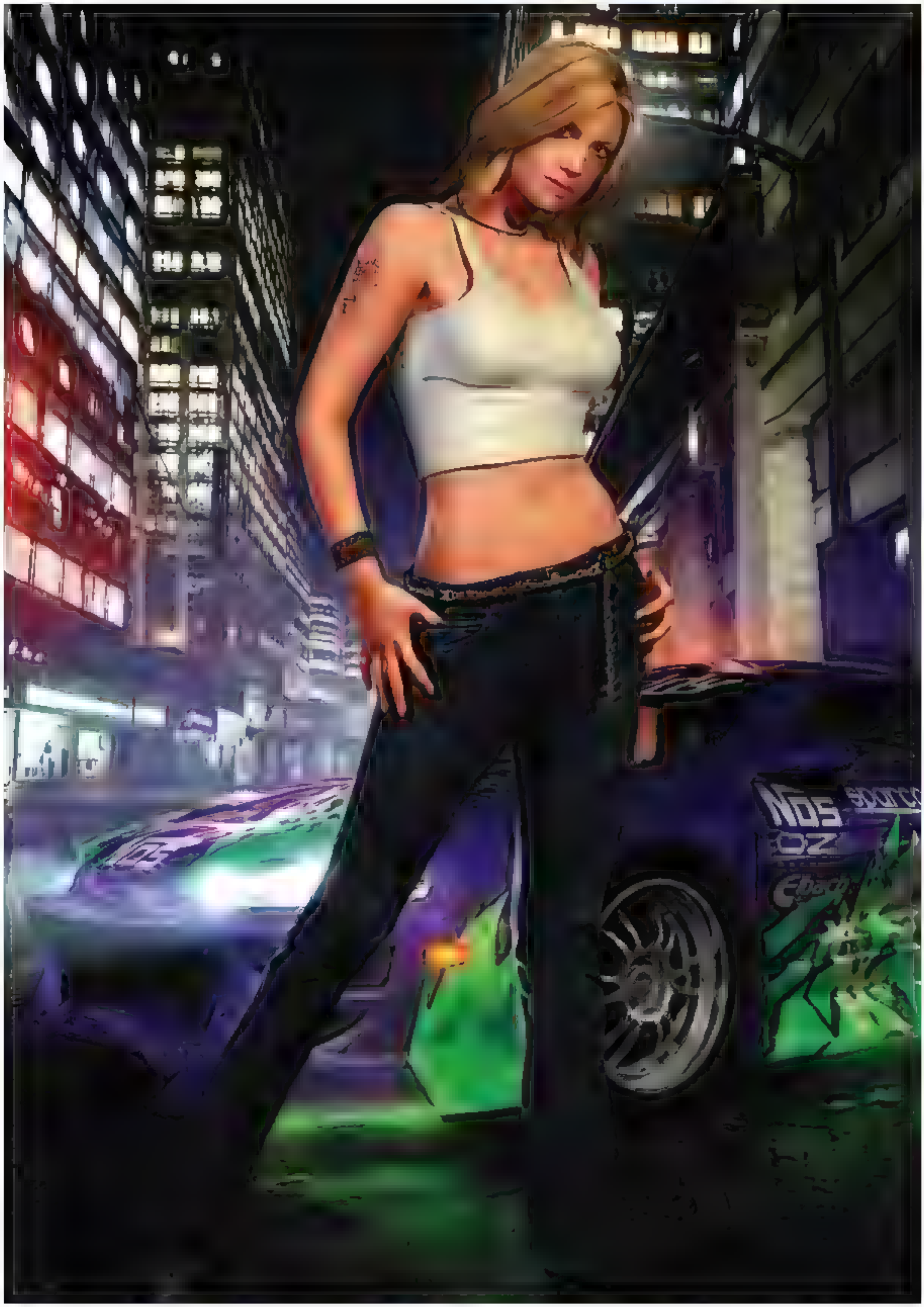
The most important aspect is the creation of living humanity that comes from the design. Also important is the style and the strong characteristic that shows its philosophy.

What are you most proud of about the girls of JGRF?

We are most proud of their balance between fashion and originality—it cannot be that is different from youth or Victorian.

Your favorite character ever (from any game)?

My favorite character is Pac-Man of Pac Land (Ueda). Definitely Lara Croft of Tomb Raider (Hikoshi).



Need For Speed Underground

Insert Date: November 2003
Famous For: Saying "go!" and looking really great doing it.
The game: Tuner car circuits through city streets at breakneck speeds featuring 20 "rides" to tune, drift and drag.
System: PC, PS2, GC, Xbox **Developer:** EA **Publisher:** EA

Elisa

Three Questions

Ian Lloyd Associate Art Director/Character Supervisor SSX3

What do you feel is the single most important aspect of character design?

Storytelling—a character tells a story about themselves through their appearance, their performance and their voice. We tend to be pretty straightforward in designing characters that you can get an immediate read on. Once you have this defined, you can start to mess with these perceptions to get the character to perform certain roles within the cast of characters. It's almost impossible to design these characters in a vacuum as they all play a specific role within the cast of characters in the game and ultimately appeal to a broad range of users. It's abundantly clear that you can never please everyone, but I'm pretty satisfied when I hear people strongly promoting their favorite characters from the SSX series and nobody can agree on who those characters are! We've tried to design the characters of SSX to appeal to everyone, and to achieve this goal you need to put enough specifics in there to make the character unique, but you also need to leave some room for a broad spectrum of users of all ages, genders, nationalities and backgrounds to project their own ideas and associations on to. I think too often character designers get all the stereotypes covered but never go beyond that point. It's a tough balance with lots of external pressures on the designers, but I really feel strongly that if you give a character a place to come from, in the form of a history, experiences, preferences and dislikes, the user will pick up on it and more readily engage in the interactive process of bringing that character to life in their mind. These things don't need to be explicitly stated to the audience, which is the temptation; rather, the designer just needs to have this information in mind when designing the character and it will find its own voice through all the decisions that are made along the way.

What are you most proud of regarding the girls of SSX?

I'm glad that many people seem to react to them in a positive way. We've always strived to make sure we have a good balance between overtly appealing female characters and cool characters that happen to be girls. Obviously all of the characters are competitive athletes, full of confidence and very much dictating how they move through life. You won't find any damsels in distress in SSX. Again, each character has a role to play so rather than pump them all full of silicone and take the easy way out with a crew of Barbie-esque clones, we've tried to make sure we present a range of female athletes that will appeal to a broad audience for reasons beyond their good looks. The other aspect of presenting a range of character types is that polarities and rivalries naturally emerge and our AI systems help the user engage in and invest in these relationships.

Your favorite character ever (from any game)?

I'd have to say Abe from the Oddworld series is the frontrunner, with Jin Kazama from the Tekken series and Solid Snake from the Metal Gear Solid series. All of these characters have been designed to tell a clear story about themselves and their designs engage the user in a way that I find very satisfying. Abe is great because he is the complete package. His voice, motion and appearance work in concert to make him a fully realized character. He's ugly as hell but endearing in a way that so few sexy characters could ever hope to be. The fact that he's an underdog who is capable of greatness is always a satisfying angle with a character but often a tough sell from a marketing perspective. Abe just wouldn't work if he looked like Justin Timberlake. Jin kicks some serious butt. There is an underlying storyline in Tekken that is played out through the dramatics that I think have a good balance between spelling out just enough of a story and leaving the rest open to the user to speculate on. It's a great way to engage the user and sometimes we get too wrapped up in clubbing them over the head with the stuff. Jin plays well, has tons of attitude and has a dynamic feel to his design. His hair alone gives him a built-in perception of speed and his wardrobe is flashy but primary and powerful. The fighting in Tekken is the most satisfying as the characters really feel like they have weight, speed and generate forces capable of doing some serious damage. Too many fighting games float the characters around all over the place, totally killing the believability. Note the term believability vs. realism. I can accept a completely stylized character as being believable if the conventions by which he is governed are properly laid out. Realism is usually pretty boring in most video games. This is a medium of pushing reality to something more satisfying. Snake is effectively, from a visual standpoint, a standard soldier, allowing the user to project their own associations onto him, but there's just enough there to make him distinctive and give him that gritty, world-worn attitude. His voice is gravelly and brooding, his posing and motion heroic and he plays his role perfectly. You become Snake when you play the game and adopt his persona. They might have gone a bit overboard with the dramatics on Sons of Liberty, but having said that, there were a lot of very satisfying and entertaining moments too. It's all about balance.

"...pump them all full of silicone and take the easy way out..."

Ian Lloyd Associate Art Director/Character Supervisor SSX3

"The women of XGRA are a ruthless bunch of speed freaks bent on winning at all costs."

Mercury

TRON 2.0

Insert Release September 2003

Release: Ron Wilching Jet Bradley's book. Played by Rebecca Romijn Stamos, Mercury is a rogue program with a need for speed that she quenches at maximum velocity aboard her Syd Mead-designed Light Cycle.

The game: The FPS game is best in 2004. Blindingly vivid non-environments highlighted by intelligent puzzles, awesome first-person action and mind-blow Light Cycle races that leave you begging for more.

System: PC **Developer:** Monolith **Publisher:** Buena Vista

Three Questions

Eric Kohler Art Director, TRON 2.0

What do you feel is the single most important aspect of character design?

The single most important aspect of character design (especially for games) is silhouette. The basic shape of a character, even if it's blurry, backlit or far away, should still be unique and interesting. Think about Batman, Bart Simpson or Lara Croft (all great characters). If all you could see of any of these characters was their silhouette, you'd still recognize them. A character's core shape is the foundation that color, contrast and detail are built onto. Just like a building, if the foundation is no good, then the rest will collapse. It won't matter how cool the details of your character are if the overall shape is blah. With character design, like everything else, get the basics right before you sweat the details.

Which is your favorite aspect of the women of TRON 2.0?

We are most proud that our female characters are tough, capable individuals that are visually unique. In many games the female characters seem to have certain "sheet" anatomical similarities that we at Monolith try to avoid. Our female characters don't have cookie-cutter bodies or personalities. Mercury, for instance, is smart and sexy, and she doesn't have a single body part the size of a watermelon.

Your favorite character ever (from any game)?

My favorite character ever is Pierre the Maze Ring and his legion of make-up wearing thugs from No One Lives Forever 2: A Spy In H.A.R.M.'s Way. It doesn't get any better than a verbally abusive gang boss on a unicycle or a 350-pound mime with a tommy gun.

"Mercury is smart and sexy, and she doesn't have a single body part the size of a watermelon."

Eric Kohler Art Director, TRON 2.0

Three Questions

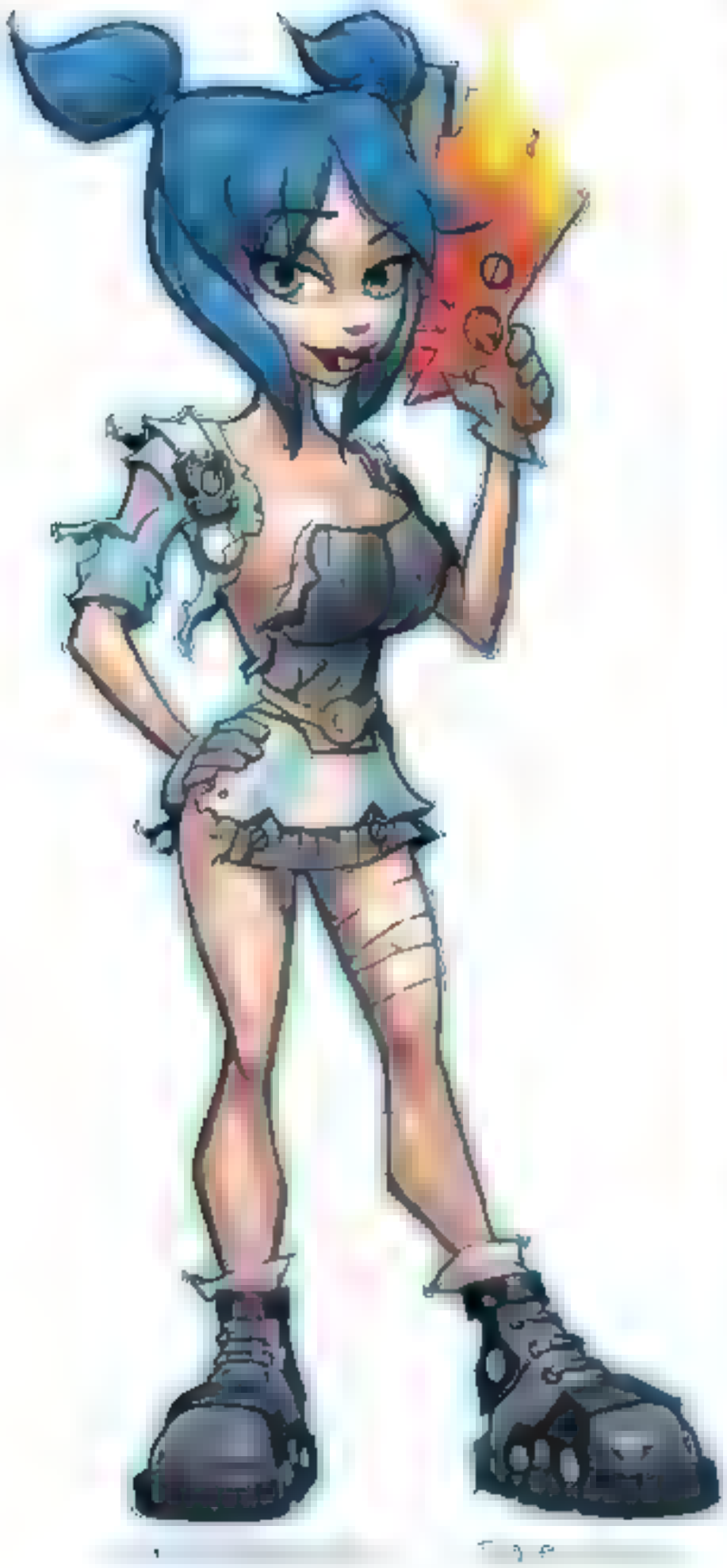
What do you feel is the single most important aspect of character design?

What are you most proud of regarding the girls at Freaky Flyers?

Your favorite character and... [from any game]

Retro

And finally, a few of those nearest and dearest to our hearts from yesteryear. From 16-bit sprites to the specs of 3D, some of gaming's early girls...

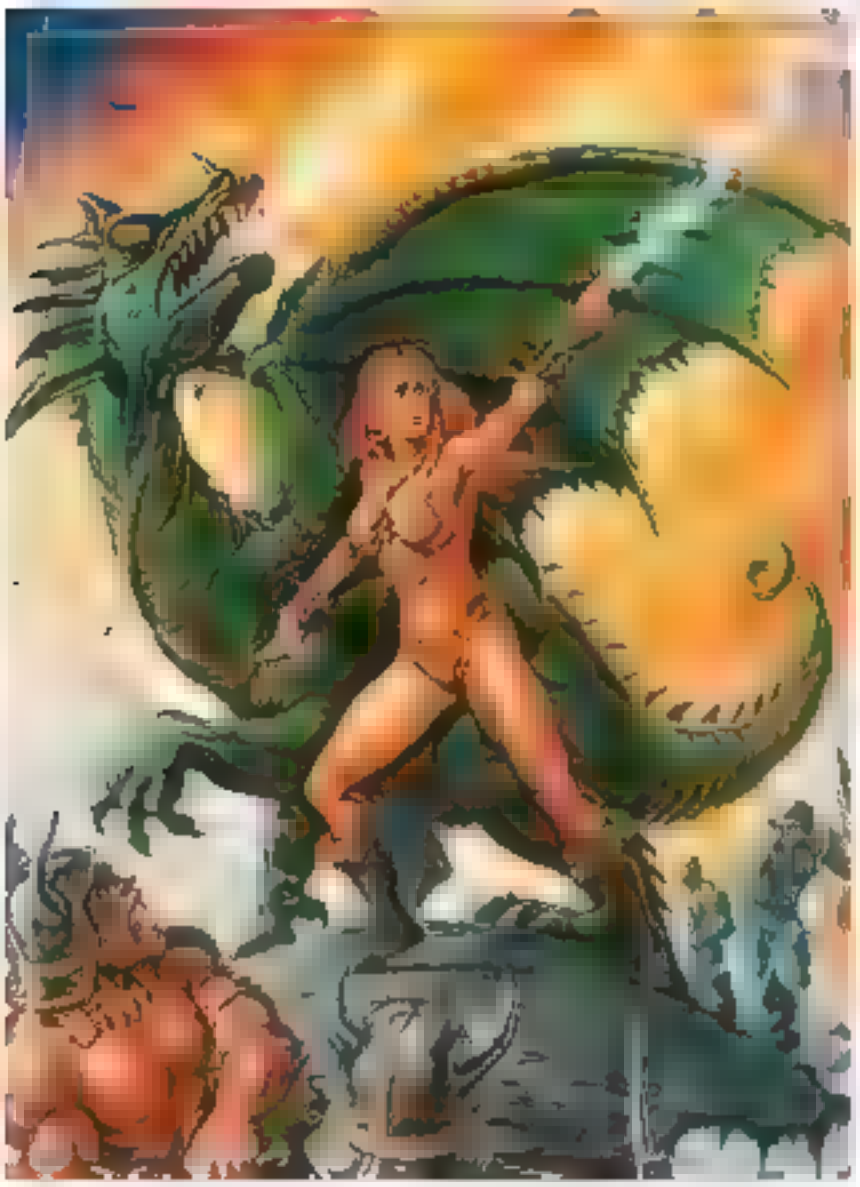


Vela

Team Innocent

Developer: Hudson Soft

Team Innocent was the first game to incorporate animated characters on fixed pre-rendered backgrounds, prior to Capcom making it a staple in 1996 with Resident Evil. The game featured an archaic form of scaling sprites but featured three jiggle-tastic female operatives—Said, Lilia and Ariel—and gorgeous cinemas, making it one of two games worth buying a PC FX for (one of the worst and coolest import systems you can own), the other being Zenki.



El Viento

Genesis 1991
Publisher: Renovation
Developer: WolfTeam

WolfTeam packed an unheard of amount of innovation into their 1991 Mega Drive entry, El Viento. Huge gelatinous bosses, attacking motorcycles and cars, and the largest, most animated explosions anyone had ever seen (which would go on to become a WolfTeam trademark) worked in tandem with stellar character animation and lightning-fast gameplay.

Alisia Dragoon

Genesis 1992
Publisher: Sega
Developer: GameArts

Grandia, they created a Genesis action/platform game like no other, featuring a scantily clad female lead: Alisia Dragoon. She summoned companion beasts and shot thunderbolts from her hands, but somehow never caught fire as a franchise.

Mischief Makers

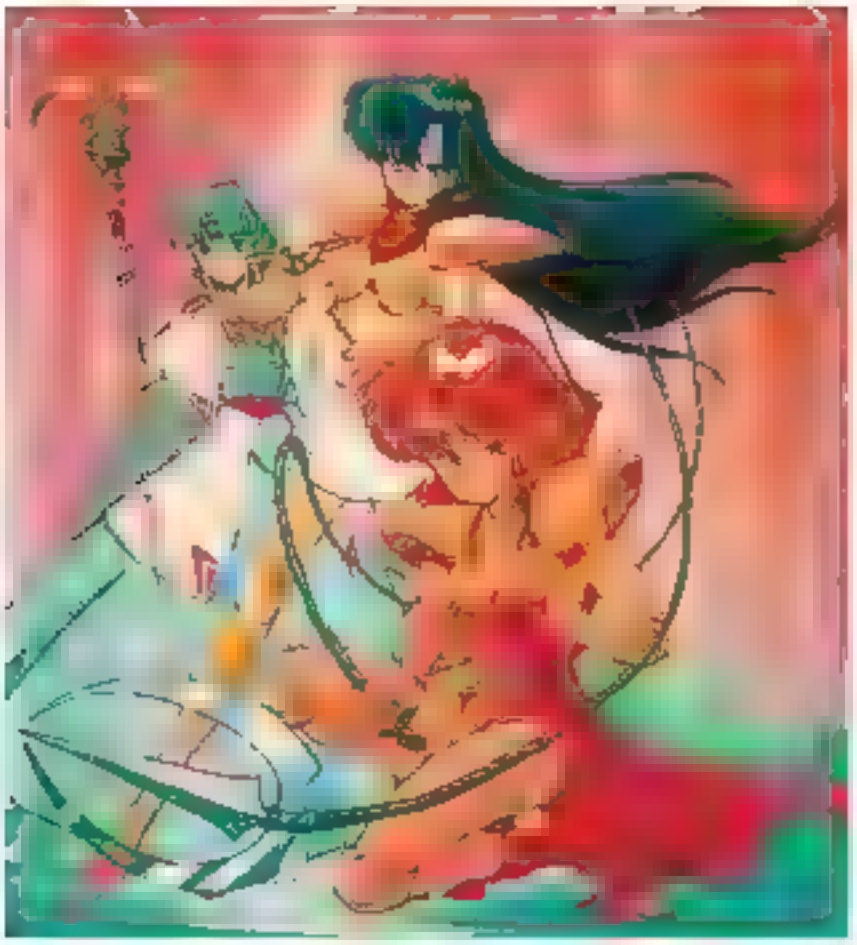
Nintendo 64 1997
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Treasure

Treasure's game about a super robotic maid (hey, kind of a girl) rescuing her perverted creator from the clutches of evil Clancers ranks among the best 2D games ever made. The game's hook, a series of ingenious play mechanics that revolved around clasping and shaking "shake-shake," resides in a world so surreal it defies description, among special effects and boss battles so endearing they will likely never be equaled. This was the peak of 2D—the art form at its most intuitive, crafted by the masters at Treasure.

Magic Knight Rayearth

[redacted]
[redacted]
Developer: Sega

Even though Hikaru, Umi and Fuu were equally super-deformed versions of their anime selves, this rich, superbly drawn top-down action-RPG was one of the Sega Saturn's very best; it was also the last SS game ever released in America, having taken Working Designs 30 long months to ready for the U.S. market, as only they could. Rayearth is a top-down treasure that more than holds up today due to the fantastic story, beautiful music and Sega's masterful craftsmanship, creating a bold, bright, layered world riddled with gorgeous effects and stunning hand-drawn art.



Valis I, II, III

Genesis/TurboGrafx 1988-1991
Publisher: Renovation
Developer: Renovation

Valis' Yuko, Cham and Valna comprised 16-bit's first female ensemble. While Yuko was chosen to wield the mighty Valis sword, players could switch to Cham or Valna (wielding staff and whip respectively) as needed, within classic side-scrolling platform levels, beating down cloaked demons, dragons and all manner of regal monstrosities.

Devil Hunter Yohko

Mega Drive 1990
Publisher: Sega
Developer: Masa

Hot off her anime debut, Devil Hunter Yohko was a spectacular Mega Drive game, albeit sorely lacking in the character art department. She didn't look so much like her animated counterpart in sprite form, but the mystical worlds and deep platforming play mechanics kept us glued.

Popful Mail

Sega CD 1993
Publisher: Working Designs
Developer: Falcom/Sega

Within this joyous side-scrolling adventure playing as Mail, a tomboy bounty hunter (or one of her comrades, Tatt or Gaw) in search of the elusive Muttonhead, Falcom (creators of the legendary Ys) packed 20 minutes of anime and 2 1/2 hours of spoken dialogue, a technological feat for the time. Popful Mail was another side-scrolling masterpiece lovingly localized for the U.S. Sega CD by Working Designs.

Silhouette Mirage

PlayStation 1998
[illegible]
Dev: Treasure

Shyna Nee Shyna may have been a messenger of justice sent by a computer program to beat down the virus that divided the world's inhabitants into Silhouette and Mirage, but she's still a girl...I think. One thing is for sure: this was yet another unforgettable walking acid trip from Treasure, topping off their 2D arsenal with a game that saw hordes of disturbing masked dolls, pumpkin heads, two-story-high revolvers, freakish blimps and a boss battle across a gigantic bowl of steaming ramen. And those were the normal

Etc.

Last but most definitely not least, still more females deserving of your attention, either etched into our heads and minds or waiting in the wings...

Panzer Dragoon Orta

Xbox
2003
Sega/Smilebit

One of the most elegant females in all of gaming, the ageless Orta connects with the player and her beloved dragons, creating an extraordinary bond without ever speaking a word. Few, if any, games have aspired to the level of design and exhilaration displayed by this series, recently brought to fruition by the incomparable Smilebit.

Star Fox Adventures

GameCube
2002
Nintendo/Rare

Okay, zip it. In the fox world, this is Halle Berry. The only thing missing in regards to Krystal—who stars in the first moments of Star Fox Adventures—is more of her. The sole survivor of her home planet of Cerinia, her luck takes a turn for the worse when she enters the Lylat system and meets up with General Scales. Lucky for her, Fox McCloud is on the case. Look for more of Krystal in the upcoming Star Fox 2.

Resident Evil

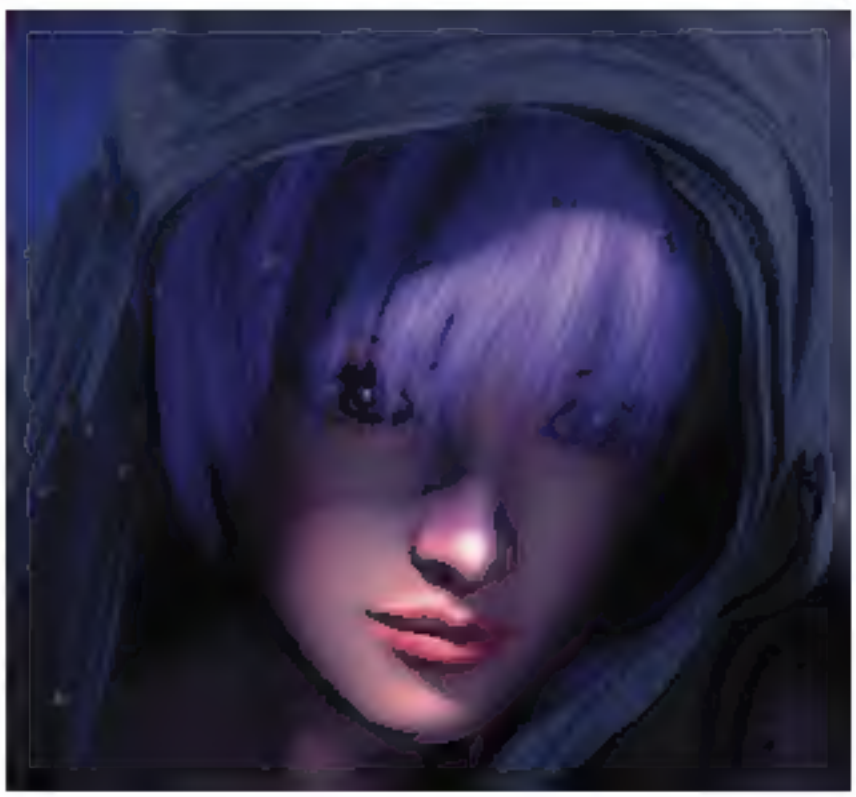
Live Action Jill Valentine: Sienna Guillory
From The upcoming Resident Evil sequel
Resident Evil: Apocalypse

One great video game movie deserves another, and so it shall be done. Milla's back for more, along with Sienna Guillory, who looks uncannily smart in the Jill Valentine get-up. Michelle Rodriguez, on the other hand, isn't likely to return.

Ninja Gaiden

Xbox
December 2004
Tecmo/Team Ninja

Okay, Christina Aguilera has gone too far! Actually, we know little about Itagaki's Gaiden girls (from the upcoming sequel a decade in the making) other than they run the gamut from likely ninja to no-likely ninja. We spoke with Itagaki about them briefly in a recent interview and he just smiled. Must have something to do with the fact that one is Ayane from Dead or Alive...



Advent Rising

Xbox
Spring 2004
Majesco/Glyphx Games

When designing any character, Donald Mustard of Glyphx games tells us it's all about the silhouette. "You should be able to squint your eyes so that all you can see is the silhouette and have your character still read as the coolest thing ever. I say this because in video games you spend the majority of the time looking at characters that are farther than five feet away from you. Once any character is distanced from the camera, all you can really rely on to communicate character is shape and gesture. To me, this is the most fundamental (and the most overlooked) aspect of design." Having witnessed the grand scope of Glyphx's upcoming epic (penned by Orson Scott Card), we're certainly believers. The main characters in Advent Rising look, react and move with stunning realism to the extent that the connection between game and player is established like never before. You will come to know and care about Olivia and Marin...if you don't already, that is.

Alias

Xbox, PS2, GameCube
Winter 2004
Acclaim Cheltenham

It's nice to see a TV show deserving of a game receive one as formidable as this adaptation from the capable hands of Acclaim's Cheltenham studio. The in-game model [illegible] cliffhanger...

Ico

PS2
[illegible]
Sony

Far too few gamers discovered Ico's magnificent riches, but that doesn't take away from the fact that the game is a modern classic—grandly imaginative, beautifully constructed, extraordinary in its ability to create a dreamscape world. For those who balked at its emphasis on quiet artistry and mood over complex gameplay, well, that was the majestic point. With the subtle urgency of protecting and guiding the enigmatic princess through the castle prison, Ico felt less like a game and more like a fine adventure.

BMX XXX

PS2, GameCube, Xbox
[illegible]
Acclaim/Z Axis

In an attempt to cash in on America's apparent appetite for sleaze, Acclaim dropped the video game equivalent of Deep Throat and got bashed instead of cash. Filled with pimps, hos and enough naughty bits to crack a nun, BMX XXX was a porn-fest first and good game...well, it wasn't. Nice poster though.

Drakan

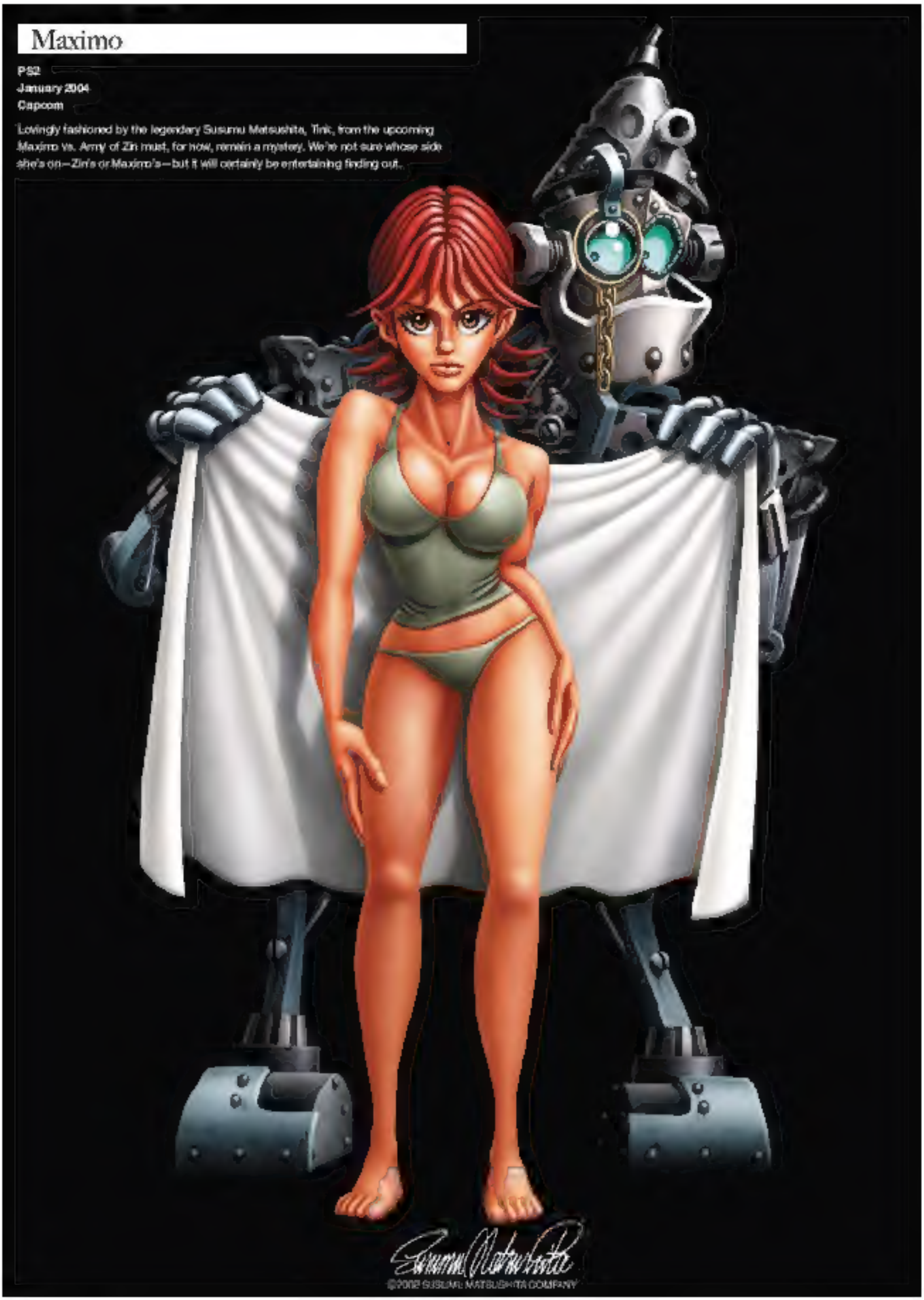
PS2
January 2002
SCEA/Sunset

Drakan: The Ancients' Gates is one of the few games to successfully blend flying and third-person adventure, and does so in a vast, seamless world filled with diverse landscapes, cavernous labyrinths and breathtaking skylines. Rynn herself is an amazing character. Throughout the game, the armor and upgrades you buy take shape on the model and her relationship with her dragon borders on sublime. Easily one of the best adventure games available for the PS2, even today. Block out some serious time though; it's a good 50-hour journey.

.hack

PS2
2003
Bandai/Cyber Connect 2

Together, Kite and Blackflows fight contaminated code in Bandai's simulation of a corrupt MMORPG called "The World," an online phenomena that's having adverse effects in the physical realm of a not-so-distant future Tokyo. The game's passable technology is compensated for by the intriguing four-game plot...and the opportunity to jack-in with Blackflows.



Maximo

PS2
January 2004
Capcom

Lovingly fashioned by the legendary Susumu Matsushita, Tinic, from the upcoming Maximo vs. Army of Zin must, for now, remain a mystery. We're not sure whose side she's on—Zin's or Maximo's—but it will certainly be entertaining finding out.